University of Alberta

The Literacy Experiences of Family Island Participants in the Bahamian Adult Literacy Program

By
Ruth L. Sumner

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of Elementary Education

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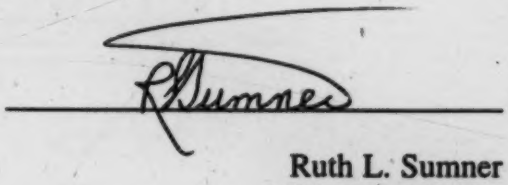

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement (BALM) program through the experiences of Family Island learners as perceived by them, their tutors, and program coordinators. The participants included four coordinators, 18 tutors and 20 adult learners from four selected Family Islands. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and program and coordinator documents. Data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying themes across data sources.

Four major themes emerged: participatory stances, program influence, instructional initiatives and evaluation. The results of the study indicated that participants were motivated to participate in a literacy program for personal gratification purposes. Participants believed that their improved reading and writing skills allowed them to become more actively involved in their communities. They also believed that their increased self-confidence, as a result of their involvement in a program, had a positive affect on their lives. The findings also suggest that regardless of the instructional methodology chosen by the organizers, participants indicated that they felt that their literacy abilites had increased. However, the results also indicated that evaluation was a short-coming of program offerings as there was little evidence indicating that either formal or informal evaluation was conducted within local programs or by BALM organizers.

The study suggests possible adaptations to BALM offerings in order to effectively meet learners' needs. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear husband and best friend Leroy and to my four "gems" Kareem, Michaela, Nikita and Candilaria.

And To:

The fond memories of my loving and caring parents, Leedon Strachan (1906-1978), and Vera Strachan (1922-1996), and my wonderful sister Grace Strachan-Taylor (1945-1990). Their value of education and perseverance in life gave me the strength to go on.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, located in the Eastern North Atlantic, is a small country consisting of more than 700 islands and more than 1000 cays. With a population slightly in excess of a quarter of a million people, the country is sometimes regarded as part of the Caribbean, particularly for political reasons. The capital island is New Providence where the city of Nassau is located. Sixty percent of the country's population live on this island. Grand Bahama, the most northerly island, is home to Freeport which is the country's second city.

All the other islands in the country are referred to as "The Family Islands" of which 21 are inhabited. Unlike New Providence and Grand Bahama, many of the Family Islands have not experienced economic growth and do not possess the sophisticated infrastructure which their more populated and affluent sister islands enjoy. However, the government is currently making a concerted effort to improve the living conditions on all inhabited islands and is also working to promote economic growth and development in these islands. It should be noted, however, that children on all islands, regardless of the number of inhabitants, have access to schools.

Education has been a top priority for decades in the country. Under British rule, it was compulsory for all children between the ages of five and 14 to attend school. This policy has just been reviewed and the school leaving age has been extended to 16. Not only do the Family Islands have "all-age-schools" but for the past 28 years, secondary schools have been established throughout the Bahamas. The government of the Bahamas has always stressed the importance of education. Each year in the national budget, education receives great financial support, an economic decision which is highly supported by the Bahamian population.

Background of the Study

The Bahamas has been regarded as a country with one of the highest literacy rates in the region. The Bahamas Investment Authority/Labor Standards (1994) states that "the Bahamas has an abundance of skilled labor and one of the most highly educated populations in the Western Hemisphere. The nation enjoys an adult literacy rate of over 90%" (p. 1). However, over the years, there has been a noticeable erosion in the standard of literacy among the population in general and especially among recent graduates and high school dropouts. The Hon. Prime Minister Ingraham and the political directorate of government, the Director of Education representing the professional arm of education, teachers, and members of the private sector have publicly admitted that there has been some regression in the quality of education over the years which they believe has caused a lower rate of literacy to exist than was previously recorded. Further, policy-makers have admitted that developing a solution for correcting this regression is their [Government] responsibility. As a matter of national priority they are determined to involve and motivate communities to joint action (Robinson, 1995).

In response, the Ministry of Education and Training initiated and launched a national literacy campaign, The Let's Read Bahamas project, in 1994. This project is being carried out by an Executive Advisory Committee and a secretariat that is responsible for the regional committees and their seven sub-committees. The regional committees are located in each of the Family Islands as well as Grand Bahama. These committees are responsible for setting up their own programs and for the day to day running of the programs in the various islands. However, these regional committees are answerable to the Secretariat which operates out of New Providence. Each sub-committee is comprised of persons from all walks of life--parents, students, teachers, civic and fraternal organizations, church officials, business and professional persons, the public at large as well as members of the media. The government suggested that the greatest challenge facing the nation was to provide the people with opportunities for critical, creative and innovative application of

skills as they assimilate information, analyze situations, solve problems and plan for the future. A supplement prepared by The Bahamas Information Services (1994) indicates the great financial demands of a project of this magnitude. This document notes that the project would require the coming together of various ministries, corporate private and public organizations, if the Let's Read Project were to be a success: "There can be no short-changing here" (Robinson, 1995, p. 9). Through continued planned activities, the project developers hope to positively affect learners' abilities and desires to read and to produce life-long readers as they meet the challenges and adjust to the technological advances of the twenty-first century.

In the tourism industry, the Bahamas is referred to as Nassau and the Family Islands, which represent the two major cities and the remaining inhabited islands of the island nation. For many years when foreign nationals spoke about the Bahamas, usually they were referring only to Nassau for it was the central area for tourism. In the early days of tourism, all visitors coming to the Bahamas actually went to Nassau. It was not until the late 1960's, after the development and recognition of the second city, Freeport, on Grand Bahama, that tourists began to trickle into Freeport. However, the rest of that island was not included in this major industry.

By the early to mid 1980's, the Minister of Tourism at the time, recognizing the unique attributes of the other islands, saw the wisdom in promoting not just Nassau but the country as a whole as a tourist destination. It was during this era that the name used to refer to the other islands was changed from "Out Islands," which sounded more like "out casts," to "Family Islands." The new name depicted a more united family, a more united country.

The islands chosen for this study, Abaco, Andros, Exuma and Grand Bahama, are representative of the Family Islands for they share many of the same social and economic needs. Three of these islands have large pine forests and they consist of many small, closely knit communities scattered throughout the length and breadth of each island. The

majority of the islanders depend on farming (agriculture) and fishing as a means of livelihood, particularly in the far reaching communities of these islands. Each of the islands has a capital or major settlement (community) where the office of Local Government is usually located. Mail-boats deliver mail and freight on a weekly basis and there are also daily air services to the islands from Nassau.

Marsh Harbour is the main settlement on Abaco, the third largest island in the Bahamas. Residents from the rest of the communities on the island as well as from the surrounding cays, for example, Dundas Town, Treasure Cay, Coopers Town, Elbow Cay, Hope Town, and Green Turtle Cay, travel to Marsh Harbour regularly to do their banking or shopping. Many of these people also work in Marsh Harbour. The major international airport for the island is in close proximity to the community.

George Town is the main settlement on Exuma. Residents living on the mainland travel there on a daily basis to work or to conduct personal business. Like Abaco, the major facilities are located in or very near to the settlement. The remaining settlements and surrounding cays like Rolleville, Rolle Town, Moss Town, Barry Tarry, Staniel Cay, Farmers Cay and Black Point are small farming and fishing villages. Exuma is noted for farming, in particular, onions. They supply most of the onions used for local consumption in the Bahamas. The people are self-sufficient in basic farm products.

Andros, the largest of the Bahama islands is divided into three distinct areas, North, Central, and South. Nicolls Town, a settlement in the north, is the capital of the island. Local government offices are set up in each of the three major districts. Each district has weekly mail-boat services and daily air services from Nassau. Some of the communities are connected by bridges or by regular, daily ferry services to the various settlements, separated by water. Fresh Creek, Lowe Sound, Mastic Point, Mangrove Cay, Smiths Point, The Bluff and Kemps Bay are some of the settlements on the island. Andros is noted for agriculture: it has large areas of fertile land and large quantities of fresh water. Agriculture is the main source of employment and income.

Grand Bahama, the second largest of the inhabited islands in the country, was chosen as one of the sites to be included in the study. Even though it may be considered more affluent than the other Family Islands, other than the restricted area of Freeport, the remainder of the island is very much like the other islands noted above. While some of the communities on Grand Bahama may be larger than those on the sister islands, they have the same needs and way of life. The inhabitants in these Grand Bahamian communities are very similar to those in the Family Islands. Many people living in the Pinder's Point, Eight Mile rock, West End and McLean's Town areas also rely on farming and fishing as a means of income. However, a number of people from these areas work in the Freeport area. Also, many persons have moved from the other islands to Grand Bahama in search of jobs, especially during the period when the lumber industry was booming on the islands. They, too, live in these communities, bringing with them culture and traditions of their former home islands.

While there exists on New Providence pockets of inner city areas, these areas are dissimilar to the Family Islands. New Providence is a very small island compared to these islands. It is 144 sq. miles in area. Because of its well developed infrastructure, services are in place to meet the social and economic needs of the residents of that island. As a result, their needs are more readily met or attended to than those of their peers on the Family Islands.

Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement

The Adult Literacy program, now known as Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement (BALM), is one of the seven programs included in the Let's Read Project. According to the BALM documents the committee for this program is responsible for its implementation, for developing instructional programs, for the training of volunteers to work with adults and for the carrying out of a national survey to identify the present rate of literacy in the Bahamas. The adult literacy committee has collaborated with UNESCO in developing the program.

The short term goal of the adult literacy program is that the majority of the adults enrolled in the program will be able to read at improved levels. The committee hopes that by the beginning of the 21st Century, there will be a cadre of trained personnel in the teaching of reading to work with less literate adults. Also, it is anticipated that a permanent adult literacy center will be established and that personnel will be able to utilize the service provided through Distance Education to educate persons throughout the nation. Moreover, it is expected that there will be a more enlightened and educated adult population as a result of the project (Paper prepared for The Bahamas Information Services, 1994). Over the past three years several training sessions have been conducted in the Laubach Approach to reading, particularly in Nassau and Grand Bahama where this method is currently used exclusively. However, the national survey to identify the literacy rate in the Bahamas, as recommended by the UNESCO representative, has not yet been conducted.

Purpose of the Study

In light of the geographic problems that an archipelagic nation creates, the educational opportunities of some of the country's present adult population may have been less adequate than they could have been. In spite of less than perfect offerings, however, a number of adults continue to enroll in continuing education courses, either for upgrading or for general interest. One may question why some adults avail themselves of current program offerings while others ignore them. For those who do attend, how do the programs meet/not meet their needs?

The Bahamas is a growing nation and in order to benefit from the development process, the country will need a majority of its citizens to be literate and well educated. If democracy is to prosper in the country, then its citizens must be able to understand and participate in the educational process. The wealth of any nation depends to a large extent upon the development of its human resources. Hence, politicians and policy-makers, when planning any kind of development, need to understand the importance of human capital. I

suggest that for the Bahamas to forge ahead with its development, there is an urgent need to have excellent, functioning adult literacy programs in place.

Because of my Language Learning background, I have always been interested in literacy. However, after working for years with adult learners through continuing education and at the college level, I have acquired a particular interest in adult literacy. The recent initiation of the Let's Read Project provided me with an ideal opportunity to blend my professional interests with one of my country's major literacy efforts. The purpose of this study was to examine within the environment of the Family Islands and Grand Bahama the effectiveness of the Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement component of the Let's Read Project.

Research Question

The study was centered around the following research question: How does the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program?

Conceptual Framework

A Social-Cultural Perspective for Literacy

Street (1994) contends that the power to define and to name is itself one of the essential aspects of the uses of literacy. He contends that we need to be more careful about terms when addressing literacy itself. Hence, he suggests some key concepts as a kind of framework on which to hang descriptions of literacy in practice. As there are different ways of looking at literacy in different contexts, Street prefers to use the term "literacy practices" rather than "literacy as such." He further regards the notion of a single, autonomous literacy as having pre-defined consequences for people and societies. Such views support the perspectives of Graff (1987), Gee (1990), and Street (1990) who suggest that narrow, culturally specific values about what is proper in literacy are maintained within mainstream society. Street prefers the 'ideological' model of literacy for

he contends that it recognizes a multiplicity of literacies: that the meaning and uses of literacy practices are related to specific cultural contexts; and that these are always associated with relations of power and ideology, they are not simply neutral technologies.

Street (1994) further urges that no matter which forms of reading and writing we learn and use, they are associated with certain social identities, behavioral expectations and role models. He alludes to Horsman's (1990) study involving women in Nova Scotia, Canada where those providing courses for women assumed that literacy is associated with specific female identities. While the women saw literacy as a way out of the home and out of domestic constraints, the programs often took literacy classes back to the home, hence returning the women to their domestic identity. The literacy skills provided by the programs were in keeping with the jobs assumed by the planners or organizers to be appropriate for women. In other words, the skills were all domestically related, having to do with family nurturing and child related activities. This focus for literacy was different from what the participants originally had in mind as their purpose for wishing to extend their literacy abilities.

Street (1984) makes three recommendations with respect to literacy. Firstly, he contends that the concept of literacy must be clarified and refined. He notes that the study of literacy practices should occur in diverse cultural and ideological contexts. His second notion is that our research should start with the people and their circumstances and beliefs, in order to understand their cultural meanings and their uses of literacy practices, so that we may build programs and campaigns on these premises rather than on our own cultural assumptions about literacy. These sentiments are also reflected in the work of other researchers (e.g., Fagan, 1991; Horsman, 1990).

Thirdly, Street (1984) suggests that we link theory of the kind being developed in the 'new literacy studies' (e.g., Reder and Green, 1985; Scribner and Cole, 1981) with the experience and insights of practitioners--the tutors and coordinators. Such practitioners have worked in the fields of literacy for a long time and are able to teach us much about the

needs and desires of participants and the problems encountered in the process (Street, 1984). He maintains that these approaches would provide a richer and more sustainable approach to policy in the field of literacy than trying to establish 'standards of functional literacy'.

Gee (1987) defines discourse as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social net-work" (p. 3). Discourse may be either primary or secondary. Everyone, by being a part of a family or some other close knit group will acquire primary discourse. Gee (1987) further explains:

> All humans, barring serious disorder, get one form of discourse free so to speak, and this through acquisition. This is our socio-culturally determined way of using our native language in face-to-face communication with intimates (intimates are people with whom we share a great deal of knowledge because of a great deal of contact and similar experiences). (p. 7)

Within the primary discourse, oral language is the key. According to Gee (1987), "it is the birth right of every human and comes through the process of primary socialization within the family" (p. 7) and extends outwards. Primary discourse allows us to first of all make sense of the world and enables us to interact with others. Secondary discourses, on the other hand, build on and extend the uses of language acquired from the primary discourse. Gee suggests that we acquire primary discourse subconsciously. This acquisition comes through socializing with our immediate families, by being exposed to models and through trial and error. It does not involve the process of formal teaching. In other words, it happens naturally in settings that are meaningful and functional. Those acquiring primary discourse realize that they need it in order to function, hence taking control of their first language so to speak. It gives us a home-based sense of identity.

Secondary discourse on the other hand involves conscious knowledge gained through the teaching process. While this teaching would involve explanations and analysis, according to Gee (1987) this means breaking down the concept or thing to be

learned into its analytic parts, which involves attaining some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter being taught. That is, one feels a sense of liberation and power because meta-knowledge allows one to manipulate, to analyze and to resist while advancing. This is not the case when acquiring primary discourse. Unlike primary discourse, secondary discourses are developed by, having access to, and experience with 'secondary institutions' (e.g., church, schools, government offices, workplace). Secondary discourses involve using written or oral language or both.

Gee (1987) refers to Discourse as, "identity kits" which he associates with the different roles one has to take on, for example, being a Bahamian or a Canadian, a man or a woman, a member of a particular socioeconomic class, a teacher or a student, a member of a club or social gathering each demands different discourses. Gee (1987) claims that discourses change often and are sometimes in conflict with each other.

My present outlook on literacy leans towards a socio-cultural perspective. In this perspective literacy is a social construction; it is culturally and politically maintained. A socio-cultural perspective directs us to regard literacy as being firmly established in social qualities rather than being an isolated set of skills and accomplishments. Adults become literate as they function within communities of literacy practices that surround them. Literacy is acquired through communication with others in the use of oral and written language for decisive tasks. In other words, when adults engage in literacy practices, they are engaging in social and cultural practices (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997). Adults do not create a new literacy each time: instead, they interact with the literacy meanings and functions that are shared in their environment. These practices, however, may differ from culture to culture. Since literacy cannot be separated from the systems of ideas in a specific setting, adults use literacy within their social and cultural contexts to manipulate the system in order to try to meet their needs.

Adults are constantly developing a repertoire of socially situated and culturally appropriate literacy practices. Literacy thus becomes an interactive process that is

constantly being redefined and re-negotiated as the adult interacts with the socio-culturally fluid surroundings (Ferdman, 1990). As noted in the literature (Center for Literacy Studies, 1992; Freire, 1985; Horsman, 1990; Hunter, 1990), adults cannot learn literacy practices in the abstract. Instead, they learn to become literate in specific social and cultural contexts. In other words, when adults become socially independent, it means that they are acting in relation to a situation. This involves taking into account other people, social and cultural norms, their own experiences as well as the technical knowledge necessary to encode and decode (Ferdman, 1990). Therefore, when we accept literacy as practice, we also acknowledge some political and cultural aspects as well.

Street's (1984) ideological model fits with this perspective for it focuses more directly on the social, political and economic nature of literacy practices. This perspective allows for the differences and values of various groups and societies and the learner is seen as an active participant in the group.

According to Street (1984) the ideological model:

> approaches literacy quite explicitly from the point of view of its location in ideological and cultural contexts but does not attempt to deny technical skills or cognitive aspects. Rather, the mental set within which these aspects are handled encapsulates them within the cultural whole and within structures of power, resisting attempts to represent them as independent or "autonomous." (p. 1)

Adults who choose to participate in literacy programs bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge which allows them to make sense of and to act upon the world. In the ideological model according to Heath (1980), literacy is perceived as a culturally organized system of skills and values which are learned in specific settings. Unlike the universal literacy concept, the ideological model conceives a "plurality of literacies" allowing for the many and varied roles that literacy plays in the lives of people and communities. As cross-cultural studies vividly indicate, if we want to make sense of the literacy practices of different learners, we need to investigate the kinds of reading and

writing that adults consider as having meaning for them and reflecting their purposes and aspirations (Lytle and Shultz, 1990).

According to the documentation BALM prepared as policy, the literacy method advocated is a skills-based approach, suggesting an autonomous model. The BALM program recommended "The Laubach Way to Reading," a skills-based approach, to be used throughout the country. However, one may question how "autonomous" this program is in reality as perceived by the learners and organizers of BALM on the Family Islands. The purpose of this study was to explore how the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program.

Significance of the Study

The effectiveness of an educational program can be determined through an evaluation process. Such an evaluation may help identify the strengths and weaknesses of a particular program. The results of this study will be of interest to those involved in the administration, implementation and funding of adult literacy programs in the Bahamas (e.g., government personnel, policy-makers, literacy coordinators and tutors of the literacy programs). The study's results may also guide coordinators and tutors in modifying their teaching and training methods in order to meet participants' requirements. In addition, literacy coordinators may be encouraged to reflect upon and examine their program practices and identify those areas of the program that do not currently address participants' needs.

This study makes a valuable contribution to educational theory and practice, particularly for the context in which it is being carried out. In the Bahamas, written documentation about literacy in general, and adult literacy in particular, is very limited. Theoretical constructs have emerged from the study's findings that may serve to guide the future of other national education programs. Examining the program through the eyes of local participants and drawing on their experiences in the evaluation of the program's

effectiveness may also add to educational theory and practice. The study also provides information about the importance of adult learning principles, theories and practices of adult literacy programs and instruction, as they relate to the needs of adult literacy learners in more isolated communities. Finally, the study suggests directions for further research within the framework of adult literacy learning in the Bahamas and elsewhere.

Overview of the Study

Chapter II presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. Chapter III presents the research framework and the research procedures that include: (a) selection of participants, (b) data collection methodologies, and (c) data analysis techniques. Chapter IV presents the findings and results of the study as well as the discussion of those results. Chapter V presents a general overview of the study and a review of its findings, recommendations for future research, and suggestions for modification to the current BALM program.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

No neutral definition for literacy exists because when we talk about literacy, we are subjected to political, social and educational implications. Myer (1991) claims that no literacy event is either artificial or neutral: It happens, people do it. She claims that to say a literacy event is artificial on language theoretical grounds would deny the particular theory of language itself used to make that claim, because the language theory would not then include all uses of literacy.

Fingeret (1983); Mikulecky (1990); and Venezky, Wagner and Ciliberti (1990) all view literacy decisions as political and social decisions. While there have been efforts made early in the century to promote adult literacy in North America, Europe, and in Third-World, and developing countries, it was not until the 1980's that literacy became a "buzz" word and efforts were made to extend the literacy awareness world-wide. According to Bhola (1990), in the 1980's there was a deepening of concern for and an intensification of discussion about adult literacy. He notes that the concerns of the 1970's and the 1980's culminated in the United Nations' declaration of 1990 as International Literacy Year. It was hoped that, through this effort, the total community of nations would rededicate itself to promoting literacy as a human right and as an aid to development, and that all would work toward achieving universal literacy by the year 2000. Newman and Beaverstock (1990) support Bhola's statement when they contend that it has only been since the mid 1980's that a more concerted national focus on adult literacy in Canada and the United States has been evident:

> America changed its mind for the better about adult literacy during the 1980's. We have been brought by the adult literacy movement from a slight (but growing) awareness of the literacy needs of adults. Now, we are ready to affirm full literacy as a value that we cannot do without. (p. 1)

The concept of adult literacy is complex. The more diverse and technological a society, the greater the demand for more complicated and sophisticated literacy abilities. For example, the advent of the personal computer has increased the importance of literacy in this age of information technology. However, while there seems to be agreement on the need to heighten the awareness of adult literacy, there is less agreement on what the term "adult literacy" really means. How adult literacy is defined determines how it is taught, how it is evaluated and how we view those adults who participate in its programs.

Perspectives of Literacy

Literacy is much more than simply acquiring reading and writing skills or being able to use the computer. Venezky, Wagner, and Ciliberti (1990), in trying to define literacy wrote:

> Social concepts such as literacy and poverty are integrally tied to their labels. Like jelly and sand that are without intrinsic shape, they are defined and redefined by the vessels that hold them. Who is literate depends upon how we define literacy--whether it is minimal ability, evidenced by the oral pronunciation of a few simple lines from a primer, or a more advanced complexity of skills, requiring numeracy, writing and reading together. (p. iv)

Littlefair (1994) suggests that:

> Language education should surely involve the awareness of the way in which language works, for we do not choose the language we use when we speak or write in an ad hoc manner. As sophisticated language users, we have learned either explicitly or implicitly how to communicate appropriately and how to read with understanding and culture. . . As we write, we mirror the way meanings are organized within our culture. We respond to general cultural and social conventions but these are not static. As technology increasingly influences our lives, there are resulting changes in modes of communication, which give wide implications to the meaning of "Literacy for Life." (p. 3)

Literacy is a means to life-long learning. Littlefair confirms that language is a very important and essential part of literacy. According to Hamadache and Martin (1986):

> The concept of life long education has gradually taken root over recent years with results which affect the establishment and conduct of educational programs. Literacy work is

> accordingly influenced by this trend and the theoretical position involved gives it its full meaning and governs the directions of its activities. (p. 13)

Malicky and Norman (1995) indicated that UNESCO, at the International Symposium for Literacy in 1975, decided to retain the relative and contextual aspects of literacy, but that this organization also stressed the political, human and cultural aspects as well. According to Hamadache and Martin (1986) the members at that symposium unanimously adopted literacy to be:

> not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open the way to a mastery of techniques and human relations. Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right. (pp. 128-129)

As a result of societal and technological changes, our definitions of literacy have broadened over the years to include much more than the basic skills of reading and writing. Bruner (1991) sees literacy as a first step in the empowerment of the mind. He suggests that literacy provides access to the culture's written record and shapes the way in which "mind" is used. Written records, he says, free the mind from the burdens and risks of memory. He further contends that reading is primary to any definition of literacy. Bruner also argues that literacy is, "a socially defined concept which represents an inspiration as much as it does a reality" (Bruner, 1991, p. viii). He strongly believes that literacy is linked to all aspects of national life--the public and the private. It is the passport to employment and the key ingredient to a fulfilling life. Farris (1992) explains that:

> Our concepts of literacy have expanded during the past 20 to 30 years, to include more than the basic reading and writing skills. The focus now is achieving a level of literacy that allows one to function successfully in the workplace and in the many tasks of daily living. (p. 7)

Farris (1992) claims that besides survival skills of daily-living and workplace skills, literacy includes creativity and critical thinking. It also involves the skills of how to find information and how to communicate with others. Farris (1992) contends that literacy, at its highest level, includes enjoying literature and creative self-expression. Fagan (1991) concurs. He also views literacy as more than just reading and writing. He argues that, as literacy educators, we need to find out what is important to a particular population. What is it that they value? What is their immediate need? For whatever is important to them at any particular time will take precedence over everything else.

Researchers have grappled with the difficulty of defining literacy (Bruner, 1991; Hayden and Wahl, 1996; Venezky, 1990). Adult literacy has been referred to as; "functional literacy", "conventional literacy", "survival literacy", "marginal literacy", and "occupational literacy", to name a few. However, functional literacy is usually associated with adult literacy. A person who is considered functionally literate is able to perform simple, everyday tasks like balancing a cheque-book, making up a grocery list or taking a driver's licence test. Venezky (1990) defines functional illiteracy as not being able to read and write or compute well enough to accomplish the kinds of basic and pervasive tasks necessary for everyday adult living.

The work of Paulo Freire (1970), a renowned Brazilian educator, has been recognized for at least three decades. His greatest influence has been in the area of adult literacy. He has also been very influential in the areas of community development and in the empowerment of the poor. His work has influenced literacy learning worldwide. Freirean education is based upon a structuralist view of poverty. The solutions to marginalization require radical, political change (Gibson, 1994).

Freire (1970) viewed literacy as a process of individual consciousness-raising and social change. In other words, he viewed literacy as critical reflection and action. He felt that context should be the subject of analysis and reflection. He conceptualized adult literacy as "cultural action for freedom" (Arnove and Graff, 1987, p. 9). Fingeret and

Drennon (1997) contend that the work of critical theorists like Freire support this view. Such theorists maintain that when adults have a critical perspective on the political and social nature of literacy, they can engage in action that uses literacy as a tool in an intentional way. According to Shaull (1997):

> Paulo Freire has perfected a method for teaching illiterate adults that has contributed, in an extraordinary way, to that process. In fact, those who, in learning to read and write, come to a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves, often take the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied them the opportunity of participation. (p. 11)

Freire (1970) attributed the oppressive state of society to traditional education. His approach comes from a third world perspective where there was a strong link between literacy and political power. In Brazil, in the 1950's and 1960's, the less literate people were not allowed to vote; hence his assertion that poverty is brought about by oppressive structures. Unlike most advocates of literacy, Freire's philosophy required a revolutionary change in society in order to remove oppressive structures. His main motive for literacy education was to 'conscientize' individuals so that they might overthrow the oppressive structures. He alleged that literacy practices are really practices of power. He also believed that people as individuals are capable of forming a praxis of liberation (McLaren, 1991).

Wang (1995) describes functional literacy as an 'unworthy' goal to be pursued where the aim is to equip learners with skills necessary to allow them to function at the lowest levels in a print dominated society. He does not believe that the practice of functional literacy will bring much change to the lives of the learners. Wang sees functional literacy as a way of equipping learners with the skills that will prepare them to enter the work force for domination and exploitation by the dominant social groups. This researcher strongly believes that literacy should prepare people to become more aware of the inequities and contradictions which exist in society and that this awareness will assist the learners in changing these conundrums rather than adapting to them. Wang sees the goal of literacy as helping learners to be more fully human rather than merely 'machinelike'

tools to function for the interest of others. To Wang (1995), literacy is not just being able to read the printed language (written word), but rather, "to read life and the world and be able to transform them" (p. 34). Wang's ideas reflect the work of Freire (1970) who focused on learner empowerment and the ability to bring about change in inequities and injustices in society.

Discussion

Literacy is and should be a universal interest. However, it is often only viewed as a problem that requires some sort of action or resolution (Walsh, 1991). The less literate are considered the root of the problem and are blamed for the lack of progress made in their societies. Such a perspective is echoed in the words of a Latino high school student when he explains, "They tell me that I am illiterate, that I can't speak English or read or write, that I am stupid. . . After hearing it so often, I am beginning to believe it" (Walsh, 1991, p. 14).

Although the Bahamas maintains a high literacy rate, currently there is concern that such literacy levels do not adequately meet the demands of the country's advancement into the 21st century. The Let's Read Project and its adult literacy component, BALM, are an attempt to address this issue.

Literacy goes beyond the narrow understanding of being a simple, measurable, have/have not condition. According to Walsh (1991), it is part of the social dynamics of the society, the pedagogy of schools and adult programs, and within the consciousness of educators and learners. To determine or envision a framework for analyzing how a society and its major institutions of learning define and perpetuate approaches of literacy, Walsh (1991) declares that we need to ask ourselves a number of questions: What does the term 'literacy' actually signify? What practices, approaches and actions does it promulgate or engender? And how are these practices shaped by race, ethnicity, class and language? The present study was an initial step in addressing some of these questions within the Bahamian Family Islands context.

National Literacy Campaigns

Many national campaigns other than those presented in this document are reported in the literature [e.g., the adult literacy campaign conducted in the United Kingdom by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the British Association of Settlements in the 1970's; India (UNESCO, 1976) and China (Hayford, 1987]. The absence of detailed descriptions of these campaigns carries no intention to undermine their importance. Rather, with the exception of the Russian campaign (Eklof, 1987) those discussed below were selected as they reflect somewhat similar geographical, political and cultural situations to those of the Bahamas. They also provide a historical perspective for adult literacy campaigns. It should be noted that, with the exception of the Kenyan literacy program (UNESCO, 1991), none of the other campaigns discussed in this study experienced British colonial influence on the cultural and financial development of their country's evolution as has occurred in the Bahamas.

1. The Russian Literacy Campaign--1919

Literacy as a topic in Russia surfaced in the late 19th century (Eklof, 1987). Literacy development as an issue continued because of the belief that education was the key to progress. The Russian literacy campaign of 1919 was one of the first national adult literacy campaigns in the world. It was emancipatory in nature with the revolution being its driving force.

The campaign was deeply rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology. This ideology supported the view that the majority of the people had to be brought to consciousness through political education so they could participate in the political process (Bhola, 1984). According to Nozhko (cited in Bhola, 1984), Lenin believed that the strength of the state was in the awareness of the masses. He was convinced that the state was only strong when there was a well-informed population to pass informed judgments on issues as well as to make its own decisions.

There was some initial reluctance and hesitation towards the idea of universal literacy within the country. In some instances, there was outright resistance. Many of the older generation refused to learn to read and write as they felt that they were much too old to learn. Furthermore, since their parents and grandparents were able to get by without book knowledge, they felt that they should be able to do the same. Resistance also came from the traditional and religious leaders who saw the campaign as a threat to their belief systems (Eklof, 1987).

Very little research was carried out before the actual launching of the campaign although a fact finding survey was conducted to determine the number of less literate people in the country. Every aspect of the media was utilized to promote the campaign. Literate volunteers, trade unionists, school students and youth organizations moved throughout the country under the directive that all those who were literate were expected to teach the less literate.

Instructional materials were innovatively used. Effective use was made of newspapers as well as follow-up reading materials. There were also publications of special newspapers and journals [e.g., the *Down with Illiteracy* journal and *the Peasant's Newspaper for Beginners in Reading* (Bhola, 1984)]. In newspapers, special columns were published for new literates. "Teach yourself" pamphlets were also made available to encourage the new literates to help themselves. Follow-up books were made available to inform and encourage the new literates to continue reading. Furthermore, the progress of the campaign was closely monitored and evaluated. Students were given an examination at the end of the course. The results from this examination determined whether students were literate or not and indicated whether they would receive achievement certificates.

The literacy campaign had far reaching effects on the Soviet Union. As a result of its efforts, the country was able to create a new political culture. Its major achievement, however, was that it was able to equalize opportunity through equalizing the literacy levels among social classes and ethnic groups as well as between the sexes. The majority of the

population was also afforded the opportunity of an education which previously did not exist (Eklof, 1987).

Research (e.g. Arnove and Graff, 1987) suggests that while the people may have learned to read and write, they did not always learn from reading. While the campaign may have brought economic and political gain to the country, it did not bring about the personal emancipation of the people (Eklof, 1987).

2. Cuban Mass Literacy Campaign--1961

The Cuban literacy campaign of 1961 (Leiner, 1987) is recognized as one of the leading international, educational, and revolutionary stories of the twentieth century. It is also one of the most widely-known mass literacy campaigns. The campaign was a massive political effort which was conceived out of the need to create a new political culture. It was particularly significant as a literacy effort as it lasted for twenty years and had far reaching educational and social implications. The campaign also provided support for the early stages of the Cuban revolution. While there had been previous literacy efforts, they were minute compared to what Cuban political leaders in 1961 wished to accomplish. They saw literacy as not merely a technical or pedagogical problem. Rather, they recognized that literacy was closely linked to a revolutionary transformation of Cuban society and its economy. This literacy campaign was a major effort of the government, under the direct auspices of Fidel Castro, to increase the level of education in the country and to break down the barriers that prevented full participation in all aspects of life by the adult population.

To mobilize such a massive campaign was no small task. Hence, a National Literacy Commission was established at the beginning of the campaign, consisting of four levels, along with national co-ordination within the Ministry of Education as well as local coordination at the Municipal level. Local Municipal Councils of Education were responsible for all aspects of the literacy campaign in their respective areas. Pilot programs were carried out to test materials, to evaluate the teaching abilities of the young literacy

workers and to try to determine what might happen in those areas where there would be counter-revoluntary groups trying to intimidate participants in the campaign and who, therefore, could sabotage the social and cultural change desired by the government.

Information about the campaign was dispersed by means of radio, television, posters and bill-boards. Newspapers and propaganda posters were placed throughout the island. There were training sessions for the literacy workers who were then sent throughout the entire island nation to teach the less literate. Volunteers were used to identify and locate the illiterates and match them with tutors. A literacy census was also taken at the beginning of the campaign and continued throughout its duration.

All tutors had to use the same teaching methods. Analytical and synthetic approaches were used. Three tests were given throughout the program. The first test was used to determine the level of literacy of the learners; the second test was administered mid-way to monitor progress. A final exam was given at the completion of fifteen lessons at which point learners were considered to have been provided with experiences that could make them literate. Certificates were awarded to those participants successfully completing the tests.

The campaign was responsible for and led to radical changes in the school system. As a result of the campaign, the idea of adult education of the masses became a reality. Citizens, who would otherwise not have been involved, were recruited into the service of the revolution. It also had considerable influence on the economy. Furthermore, the campaign raised in the people a consciousness of and appreciation for their own culture, and an awareness by the lower income population of their own position and contribution to society. Thus, the new literates became very active in the Socialist movement and developed a greater understanding of Socialism.

The Cuban Massive Literacy Campaign cost the country millions of dollars but according to Leiner (1987), its goals were achieved. The campaign was considered a

model for all other developing countries for decades, particularly for those in Latin America.

3. The Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL)--1967 to 1980

Brazil is the fifth largest and the seventh most populated country in the world. In examining the MOBRAL campaign Bhola (1984) discovered that in the 1980 census, the country had an estimated population of 120 million people. As a result of World War Two, he indicated that Brazil experienced many hardships with the result that the economy suffered greatly. There was also an urgent need for more skilled and literate workers. While the country experienced some prosperity in the 1950's, a sharp economic decline in the 1960's accounted for the high inflation. Social tensions resulted in the 1964 revolution (Bhola, 1984).

The 1964 revolution that brought the army to power was the driving force behind the literacy movement. The new government wanted to bring prosperity to the country. The literacy movement was seen as the instrument to meet the political and educational needs of the country. Achieving more favoured economic conditions required a professionalized labor force. Because of the magnitude of the movement, the government appealed to its citizens' patriotism, religious and moral duty and their obligations to their communities to become involved in the national literacy campaign. The less literate were invited to take part in the campaign for national construction and were urged to dedicate themselves to their own educational development. Bhola (1984) noted that at the time of the revolution, there were very few trained adult education personnel in the country which meant that MOBRAL had to develop its own training program to address the literacy needs of its less literate citizens. The launching of MOBRAL took place on September 8, 1967, the day observed worldwide as International Literacy Day. Its main purpose was to promote literacy among less literate adolescents and adults through a continuing education scheme.

As the campaign evolved, its aims and objectives changed in order to meet the needs of the country. Other objectives were added including the personal development of learners, improved opportunities in the job market, social mobility and social justice, political participation through voting and the fostering and preservation of the culture (Bhola, 1984). MOBRAL adopted an 'action and correction' model. The campaign evolved as a comprehensive program as it included a combination of functional literacy and continuing education programs.

The general approach within the campaign was based on the assumption that adult learners can and should be responsible for their own learning, that individual development and community development should not be separated from each other, that the community should be the starting point in learning to read and that the knowledge obtained should be applied back to the community. In addition, it was felt that cultural identities should be preserved and enriched by technology.

A variety of teaching methods were used initially to determine which would best suit a particular group or region. The choice of materials was based on appropriateness. The technical instructional structure was similar to that associated with Paulo Freire's literacy learning approach in that it made use of life experiences which were based on the generative poster. However, methodology and curriculum were standardized and a teaching kit was available for all teachers. The teachers were responsible for adapting the materials to meet the needs of the participants. Many of these teachers had only a few years of experience and very limited periods of training. Area supervisors who were responsible for all the programs received only 40 hours of training and one month of in-service. Evaluation was carried out during the teaching where teachers were given the autonomy to decide whether a learner was literate or not.

It was generally assumed that the learners were motivated because they understood the usefulness of literacy and, therefore, wanted it. The campaign was successful in

meeting its objective for it did reach the majority of the targeted population. Many of the participants were taught to read and write.

However, according to Bhola (1984) the movement received very critical external evaluations which highlighted some serious problems. There was concern about the training of instructors which was considered inadequate as the training sessions only lasted a few days. It was felt that the literacy course was rather rigid with adjustments for regional differences being ignored. According to Bhola (1984), MORBAL paid close attention to the qualitative aspects of the movement. However, negative responses to the quantitative aspects of the program were heard as critics were not always convinced of the validity of its official statistics with respect to the campaign's success.

While the MOBRAL's activities may not have satisfied those seeking radical change, they at least appeared to have strengthened community awareness and collective action. MORBAL created a demand for more political participation. Economically, it promoted upward mobility of some workers which contributed to the national pool of skilled labour in the country.

4. The Kenya Literacy Program--1979

According to the report of an International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), research review workshop held at Nairobi, Kenya in 1989; at the end of 1978, on the 15th anniversary of Kenya's independence, the President requested that a massive literacy program be launched to assist in eradicating illiteracy within the country. This venture resulted in the establishment of a complete Department of Adult Education under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Social Sciences. Initially, the program was a self-help and local initiative with no precise objectives imposed at the provincial and district levels. Rather, the Department of Education served as a source of stimulation, supervision and technical support. The organizers adopted a functional approach to literacy learning. This approach was recommended by the Department of Education which wished to link the

literacy teaching with the learners' everyday activities. In most instances, instruction was conducted in the local language.

Each course lasted for a period of nine months. At the end of the 300 to 400 hours of literacy classes, learners were expected to be literate. Post-literacy programs were made available and the necessary materials provided. However, according to the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) report (UNESCO, 1991), the post-literacy classes were very limited.

The major findings of the IIEP report indicated that one of the first problems experienced by the literacy organizers was that the program was not well advertised. Except for the year of 1981, which was considered a peak year for enrollment, the number of learners declined considerably as the years passed. However, while there were fewer learners enrolling in the classes in some areas, the number of the literacy classes increased. Initially, great efforts were made at various levels of the society to encourage adult learners to participate in the literacy programs. However, it was not realistic to continue these efforts on a regular basis. As reported in the IIEP (1991) research review:

> These realities relate not only to the specific living conditions of the learner, which are largely beyond the control of the organizers of the literacy program, but also to the quality of the literacy services that are being offered. (pp. 9-10)

As the majority of the literacy classes were held in school or church facilities overall, the provision of materials and equipment was fairly good. On the other hand, there were instances of poor teaching conditions. In some of the pastoral areas, classes were actually held in the open air, a condition that was not always conducive to learning. There were three groups of literacy teachers--the full-time teachers who were paid a salary, the part-time teachers who were volunteers and received an honorarium, and the self-help volunteer teachers who received no honorarium from the government. The local community was responsible for the up-keep of the self-help teachers. The IIEP report suggests that the lack of self-help teachers may have accounted for the decline in the mobilization for literacy. It was also reported that literacy training for the teachers was limited. The majority of the

tutors received an initial two-week training course while others were enrolled in a much longer two year correspondence course which was primarily focused towards the full-time teachers.

Learners were expected to attend four to five sessions each week for two to three hours. There were problems with absenteeism. The committees set up at each of the literacy centers to ensure greater learner involvement in the program did not appear to function adequately. In fact, many of them did not function at all. The majority of the literacy learners came from the poorer areas of the society. Although the organizers saw functional literacy as the most important component of the literacy program, the IIEP report indicated that for the learners, the functional aspect played only a very minute role in learner motivation. Learners appeared to be more concerned with acquiring basic communication skills.

The IIEP report concluded that those learners who were successful in obtaining certifications benefited from the program. It was also noted that most of the learners acquired and maintained basic literacy and numeracy skills and used them on a regular basis. As a result of participation, learners displayed more functional knowledge and expressed more assertive attitudes and behavior than those adults who did not participate in the literacy programs. The effects of the program depended on or were determined by the local environment where the literacy classes were being conducted. In other words, when the conditions were favorable the quality factors had a very positive impact on the outcome of the program.

One of the main problems according to the IIEP report was that the number of learners who were awarded certificates was very limited in comparison to the number of learners enrolled in the literacy programs. The report noted that this was probably an underestimation of the real percentage of people who had reached a certain level of proficiency since the literacy test was not compulsory. The long duration of the course may have also discouraged many of the learners from continual participation.

5. The Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade (CNA)--1980

In an examination of the Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade, Arnove (1987) noted that it was very similar to the Cuban campaign in that it was an attempt to rid the country of a repressive, political regime and to establish a new social order. In order for political and social change to take place, it was apparent that there was an urgent need for a program that would educate and re-educate the masses. A campaign with such a vision needed the support of every citizen, national ministry, and large organizations if its major goal of national unity was to be achieved. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, a National Coordinating Commission was established which consisted of many of the organizations. This commission played a very crucial role in the execution of the literacy campaign as it was responsible for determining its broader policies and for promoting and implementing all efforts of the campaign.

The learning activities within the literacy events were centered around a basic reader, *Sunrise of the People* , which according to Arnove (1987) was based to a certain extent on the pedagogical ideas of Paulo Freire. This text appeared to address strong scholarship and respect for the experiences of adult learners. Its greatest downfall, however, was that it contained political propaganda (Arnove, 1987).

According to Arnove (1987), the campaign's organizers wanted to implement a number of Freire's pedagogical concepts. For example, they felt it was important to conceive adult education as a political process which involves consciousness raising and which stimulates individuals to see themselves as makers of culture and transformers of their environment. However, the organizers deviated from some of Freire's instructional practices because they found it difficult to implement them. According to one supervisor, the first step of each lesson--the dialogue between the literacy instructor and the adult learner--was the most difficult to conduct. Young tutors had not been taught in that fashion and therefore, did not see the need to use such instructional practices in their literacy

sessions. Most of the time, this aspect of the lesson was very poorly done or not done at all.

The many organizations in the country that were responsible for the over-throw of the dictatorship were a key element in the success of the literacy campaign. These organizations assisted with the preparation, supervision and in-service of the literacy workers. At the same time, every effort was made to involve the less literate participants in the decision-making process. The campaign allowed for the coming together and sharing of lived experiences of the urban and rural populations. This procedure lent itself to mutual respect, understanding and improved social relations. The literacy workers gained self-confidence and the new literates became involved in the reconstruction of the nation.

The campaign which took place between March and August 1980, established a new model of social change because decision-making was passed on to the grass-roots level. The campaign also proved that a community, through its own efforts, and with the necessary support from the government, can provide for its basic needs. This marked the beginning of decentralized administration within the country. Furthermore, a national publishing industry surfaced within the country.

At the end of the campaign, the new literates were able to attend Adult Basic Education programs. In some respects the literacy campaign never really ended for, before it came to a close, plans were already being made for a follow-up adult education program.

Discussion

Each of the campaigns described above reflects, to lesser or greater degrees, the role literacy plays in the emancipation of its participants, and the influence of literacy in supporting governmental policies. In other words, while literacy campaigns are supported and even driven by political mandate, the improved social and economic conditions of those who participate are less evident than their increased literacy abilities.

The campaigns resulted in some changes with respect to the literacy abilities of many of its participants. The economic resources provided by governments, the efforts of

volunteers and the development of materials and other resources to support the literacy learning of new literates also appear as positive attempts to include a greater number of people as active participants within the development of a new and vibrant nationhood. On the other hand, however, the campaigns generally sought to develop greater literacy ability for its citizens for national economic rather than personal reasons. When a campaign such as MOBRAL moved towards raising the consciousness of the new literates as a means to self actualization or as an avenue for questioning the political agendas of those in power, the literacy leaders who sought such radical change (e.g., Freire), were expelled from the country.

One may ask therefore, whether the campaigns described supported the political will of participants or whether the campaigns were manipulative in moving their participants to accept the political will of their country's leaders. While each campaign indicated its success with respect to its stated goals, one may question whether the stated goals reflected a thoughtful and critical awareness of the lived experiences of the people it was designed to serve.

With the exception of the Russian campaign, literacy learning approaches presented within the campaigns do not provide a clear adherence to either a skills or emancipatory focus. Rather, the campaigns generally included aspects of both approaches. The minimal training of tutors, together with the lack of community developed materials, appear to support a skills approach to teaching literacy so that increased literacy could be achieved by all participants. On the other hand, the increased literacy levels of the marginalized minimized the differences between them and their more socially fortunate peers and brought new awareness of their power as citizens.

Program Evaluation

This study was designed to explore how the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program.

Program evaluation is based on the assumption that through examining and analyzing all components of a program, evaluators will help to identify areas where improvement is necessary. In the past, where emphasis was placed on accountability of the programs, today providers of adult literacy are more interested in evaluation that provides suggestions that will improve programs and increase the competence of the professionals involved in these programs (Steele, 1989).

Evaluations of programs are generally regarded as a step in the right direction towards improving the overall program. Raizen and Rossi (1981) suggest that the knowledge gained from evaluating a program can be useful to program organizers who are interested in practice-oriented information that may assist them in providing more effective instruction. In determining the effectiveness of an educational program, evaluation is usually concerned with investigating several areas of the program, for example, recruitment strategies, instructional initiatives and materials, assessment strategies and follow-up procedure (Lerche, 1985).

On the other hand, others (White and Hoddinott, 1991) recognize that it is not easy to determine the quality and effectiveness of a program if the program is not monitored and evaluated on a regular basis or not done at all. They further suggest that if the leaders of a nation, want to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in the economic, social and political life of the nation then adult educators must provide first class education to adults requiring upgrading. In other words, the programs adult educators provide must be equal to those provided in the other areas of education.

The issue of evaluation generally, therefore, is pertinent within the related literature to demonstrate that different models of evaluation support different methodological approaches to determining program effectiveness. In addition, program effectiveness may be "measured" in a variety of ways, one of which is through the eyes of the participants. The discussion of evaluation below is presented to provide a framework for what

constitutes program evaluation generally and to highlight the role of qualitative evaluation, in particular, for adult literacy programs.

1. Perspectives of Evaluation

Like literacy, there are many definitions for evaluation. According to Raizen and Rossi (1981) and Lerche, (1985), program evaluation is a means of determining whether a program is meeting its goals. This process according to Lerche (1985) requires having clearly stated goals and good record keeping in order to monitor whether the stated goals are being achieved. Hegedus (1995), in conceptualizing evaluation, also indicated that there must be criteria of some kind (e.g., the objectives) to compare it to, to see if they were achieved. There must also be an opinion on whether or not there is value in what has occurred.

Bhola (1979) contends that evaluation may take many forms: needs assessment, learner evaluation, or assessment of impact. He sees evaluation as going beyond the informational, for it also serves functions that are institutional, social, historical and political. He further claims that the main objective for conducting professional evaluation is to generate information that can be used in the planning and implementing of programs to improve the quality of life. Popham (1988) defines systematic educational evaluation as consisting of a formal appraisal of the quality of educational programs or education products. Popham used the term, "systematic educational evaluation" (p. 7) to distinguish formal educational evaluation from the kinds of informal evaluation that we do on a daily basis. Program evaluation sometimes concentrates on the outcomes and impacts of program practices (Franklin and Thrasher, 1976).

Knowles (1990) claims that evaluating a program is the area of greatest controversy and the weakest technology in all education. He notes that this weakness is particularly so in adult education and training. Padak and Padak (1991) also feel that evaluation is a particularly problematic aspect of adult literacy programs. Many programs have adopted an

open-entry policy and often employ volunteer tutors to accommodate as many learners as possible. These policies compound the problems of evaluation.

2. Models of Evaluation

Specialists in the field of educational evaluation have developed a variety of models. In this section four evaluation models will be briefly presented and examined for their appropriateness to the area of adult literacy.

a) The Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Model

Stufflebeam (cited in Jackson, 1992) believes that the major purpose of evaluation is to provide relevant information for decision-makers. The CIPP model developed by Stufflebeam has been widely accepted by evaluators. Stufflebeam suggests four areas of evaluation: (a) context evaluation which involves planning decisions and is concerned with assessing and evaluating the environmental variables of the program; (b) input evaluation which deals with programming decisions, assessing the various resources used in conducting a program, for example, developing strategies for achieving objectives; (c) process evaluation which assesses the procedural strategies and compares effectiveness of different approaches to instruction, extention, animation and organization; (d) product evaluation which involves recycling decisions. This final aspect focuses on assessing the effectiveness of curricular or instructional products of the program that is being evaluated, for example, determining whether the objectives are being achieved.

Bhola (1990) asserts that while the CIPP model suggests that the experimental design is not appropriate for carrying out evaluation, he feels that this model is closest to formal research models. He claims that evaluation requires some clarification of goals and objectives as well as structured observations for determining whether these goals and objectives have been or are being achieved. He emphasizes that one just cannot evaluate; there must be something to evaluate and that something is change which could occur in attitude, strategy, education, or within social, economic or political behaviours. Initially, within program evaluation, greater emphasis was placed on the traditional testing of

students' achievement in school rather than being concerned with more holistic learning perspectives. This exclusion received some criticism with the result that Stufflebeam revised the model to include broader learning outcomes to address critics' concerns.

b) Goal-Free Model

This particular model, developed by Scriven (1974) suggests that evaluation should be concerned with the actual effects of the program instead of drawing attention to its intended effects. Scriven also recommends that a holistic approach to evaluation should be adopted. From this perspective, evaluation should be multi-faceted in attending to the range of factors that influence learner and program outcomes. He contends that when the evaluators' focus is only goal-based, their views become so restricted that they may disregard very important and relevant aspects of the program.

c) Responsive Evaluation Model

Stake's (1975) responsive evaluation model can be thought of as being naturalistic in its approach. This approach focuses on what actually takes place or goes on in a program rather than what was intended by the program. It is not only concerned with the collection of data, but tries to capture the "mood and mystery of the phenomenon under study" (Bhola, 1990, p. 39). Responsive evaluation is a very informal evaluative approach and emphasizes thick descriptions of the experiences of those participating in the program.

d) Naturalistic Evaluation Model

As the name implies, the naturalistic approach to evaluation indicates that it should be carried out in a natural way, in natural surroundings (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). It is holistic in design and is based on the premise that not everybody experiences reality or the world in the same way. Proponents of this approach contend that human behaviour should be studied within its total context instead of evaluating the human learning experience in parts in order to fit prescribed evaluator agendas.

When proposing a naturalistic framework for evaluation, evaluators of an adult literacy program might, for example, first of all describe the changes that occurred as a result of the

program and subsequently attempt to identify common themes or patterns within those changes. Within this model, the major search is for understanding of a particular situation rather than for generalizations. In other words, evaluators look for insights that may be transferable to other contexts.

3. Evaluation Framework

Kirkpatrick (1976) believes that evaluation can change from a complicated, elusive generality into clear and achievable goals if it is broken down into logical steps. He suggests these four steps for the evaluation procedure.

(a) Reaction: This is the stage where information is gathered about how the participants are responding to a program as it takes place. Data are collected on what participants like best or least about the program, what positive or negative feelings they have. These kinds of data can be obtained by simply using end-of-meeting reaction forms, or through interviews or group discussions. Kirkpatrick feels that it is important to determine how people feel about the programs they attend because decisions by top management are frequently based on one or two comments made by people who have attended.

(b) Learning: A favorable reaction to a program does not assure learning. Kirkpatrick defines learning as the principles, facts and skills which are understood and absorbed by the participants. Data to determine learning could include pre/ post tests, performance tests (e.g., operating a machine from manual directions) and standardized tests (e.g., G.E.D. achievement tests). According to Kirkpatrick it is much more difficult to measure learning than it is to measure reaction to a program.

(c) Behavior: The evaluation of training programs in terms of on-the-job behavior is somewhat more difficult than reaction and learning evaluation procedures. Kirkpatrick suggests that a more scientific approach is needed. This stage requires data from observers' reports about actual changes about what learners do after training as compared with what they did before. This information can be obtained from productivity studies,

observation scales for use by supervisors, colleagues, self-rating scales, diaries, interview schedules and questionnaires. While measuring changes in behavior resulting from training programs is very difficult and complicated, Kirkpatrick feels that is it worthwhile and necessary if training programs are going to increase in effectiveness.

(d) Results: Necessary data for results evaluation can easily be obtained from the program's routine records. These include effects on turnover; efficiency; frequency of accidents, grievances, tardiness or absences, and quality control rejections, etc.

Knowles (1990) expands upon Kirkpatrick's framework by adding a fifth dimension: re-diagnosis of learning needs. He contends this point comes from the conception of adult education as continuing education. He is convinced that if every learning experience is to lead to further learning as continuing education implies, then every evaluation process should include some provisions for helping the learners re-examine their models of desired competencies and reassess the discrepancies between the model and their newly developed levels of competencies.

Evaluation procedures generally reflected quantitative measures during the 1970's and 1980's. However, current research supports the notion that evaluation requires getting into the 'skulls' of the participants--inside the social systems in which they are performing and ascertaining what they are thinking, feeling and doing. In the qualitative paradigm, data are collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, case studies, diaries and other 'human' data procedures. Once evaluators have the whole picture of the 'real-life' efforts of a program, then they may be able to decide what kind of quantitative data they require to equate real outcomes with program operations. Knowles (1990) maintains that the state of the art of evaluation now involves both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures. As a result of combining both data collection methods, much more useful information is now being obtained.

4. Evaluation of National Campaigns

Evaluation was often one of the short-comings of national literacy programs. Evaluations were either done haphazardly or were not done at all. However, there have been a few exceptions to this deficiency. Some years ago, UNESCO made a concerted effort to carry out evaluations in countries where literacy programs had been implemented (Bhola, 1990). Some of the countries included in the assessment process were Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Iran, United Republic of Tanzania and Sudan. An examination of these studies indicates that, in some cases, the evaluations that were under-taken were primarily devoted to program support, or were designed to help on-going functional literacy programs deal with specific aspects such as attendance or learner motivation. In other incidences, such as the Brazilian campaign, tutors decided whether their students were literate or not. In other words, evaluation in some contexts was separate and apart from literacy operations. In other contexts, evaluation was an integral part of those operations.

Formal program evaluations are generally not completed and in some cases not done at all. Where there are attempts to evaluate programs, the methodology is often poorly designed and frequently the evaluation does not relate directly to the programs in operation. One major concern is the lack of financial support, particularly at the governmental level. Wherever evaluation is carried out, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to lesser or greater extents. Evaluation, however, still appears to be in its infancy in the national literacy campaign field.

Previous Evaluation of Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement (BALM)

The Let's Read Bahamas Project, under the auspices of The Ministry of Education and Training, was launched in February of 1994. It was and continues to be a national endeavour. Its main objective is to address the problem of illiteracy in the schools and the wider community. BALM is just one component of the parent project which consists of a total of seven components. Many of the efforts in the early months of the Let's Read

Project focused on the school level. Therefore, BALM was not officially established until November 1994.

From the onset, the major objective of BALM was to address the issue of illiteracy in the wider community. It was expected that by the end of the fourth year, the majority of adults enrolled in the literacy programs would be reading at improved levels. In February 1995, the services of Robinson, a UNESCO consultant, were acquired to assist the Bahamian Adult Literacy Movement in developing: (a) an instrument for a national survey (adult); (b) the organization of the Secretariat; (c) training of tutor-trainers; and, (d) the development and production of curricular materials. Robinson (1995) established that while BALM had a late start, it had already confirmed certain needs:

> (a) the desire of some adults to acquire literacy skills
> (b) the urgent necessity for specialized training for the voluntary teachers of adult literacy programs.
> (c) the publishing void in the society and the urgent need for relevant, indigenous reading materials, teaching tools and learning techniques for adult learners in order to accelerate their pace of learning and maintain their interest ; and
> (d) the necessity to obtain accurate fact and figures on which to plan the future development of BALM to meet identified, practical needs. (p. 4)

Since the launching of the program, according to the BALM documents (1996), BALM has attracted over 200 tutors. Over three hundred participants have enrolled in the program throughout the country.

The Robinson (1995) report has been very helpful in providing clear directions for future modifications to BALM (e.g., the hiring of qualified staff, defining the term Functional Literacy within the Bahamian context, and the development of a national literacy survey to identify target populations, etc.). These suggestions are important for policy makers and other administrative personnel. Little attention, however, is paid in the report to obtaining the views of those who are currently involved in BALM. That is, the voices of the students, their tutors and program coordinators are much less evident as a source of data for future BALM offerings. In short, recommendations for changes to BALM evolve from a top-down perspective. The views of those at the grass roots in the program also

need to be considered if BALM is to meet literacy needs at the local level. This proposed study is an attempt to address this need.

Discussion

The evaluation models identified and discussed here can be applied to many educational situations. Aspects of these approaches have often been applied to adult literacy programs, even though these models were initially intended to be used within more institutional educational environments. Given the nature of learners who enroll in adult literacy programs, one may suggest that emphasis on the qualitative as opposed to primarily quantitative outcomes may provide greater understanding for program developers to modify their literacy offerings to meet learner needs. This is not to say that evaluations which incorporate quantitative procedures should be ignored. Rather, as suggested by the above models, evaluation procedures should be multi-faceted and address a variety of program issues. The study presented in this document includes qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures.

Kirkpatrick (1976) believes that program evaluation does not have to be such a complicated process. He provides a straight-forward framework that he feels is simple to use and would provide practitioners as well as policy-makers with valuable information. Recently, there seems to be a shift in the evaluation process. A combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects are now being used, which lends to achieving better and more meaningful results about program success.

A review of the literature indicates that attempts at evaluating adult literacy programs have generally not been very successful. Arnove (1987) and Bhola (1984) report that the greatest short-coming of most literacy campaigns conducted throughout the world is the fact that limited evaluation has been conducted. With the exception of the Russian (1919) campaign that was very closely monitored and evaluated and the Tanzania (1976) campaign that had a very strong evaluation component, very little has been done in the way of informal or formal literacy campaign evaluation. The assessment of learners' progress in

determining whether they were literate or not and who should be certified as literate has been by and large left up to the tutors. Lack of a proper evaluation mechanism within the various campaigns conducted throughout the century may have accounted for the limited success experienced by many of these campaigns.

I believe my study is novel for two reasons: Firstly, the Bahamian literacy campaign is one of the few in developing countries that has not been initiated as the result of a revolution. Secondly, the program is being examined through the experiences of participants. For the most part, the literacy campaigns presented did not consider exploring participant perspectives within their evaluation component when evaluation was conducted. In addition, this study's methodology includes several of the aspects of evaluation that Stufflebeam (1971), Scriven (1974), Stake (1975), and Bogdan and Biklen (1992) consider critical for understanding the overall influence of a program on participants' learning.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research framework, and a description of the research procedures including: (a) selection of participants, (b) data collection methodologies and (c) data analysis techniques. The study is viewed as a case study. It was conducted within a qualitative research paradigm utilizing questionnaires, interviews, documentation and a reflective journal as methods of obtaining data.

Research Design Framework

For my data collection procedures, I primarily used qualitative research methodologies because they appeared appropriate to my study by allowing me to explore the views of individuals who were currently participating in BALM. The qualitative approach also allows and encourages descriptive and comprehensive data collection, explanation and documentation, extension of insight and meaning, and inductive reasoning to arrive at the discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understandings (Merriam, 1988).

Within this research paradigm, it is assumed that reality is a multiple phenomenon (Guba, 1981; Locke, 1989). These researchers feel that there is no single reality in the social world upon which inquiry can converge. Furthermore, they see the social world as having multiple realities which are influenced by peoples' personal views of the world. Because these realities do not always remain constant, qualitative research diverges rather than converges as more and more is known, and the study of any one part of reality necessarily influences all other parts (Guba, 1981).

Research methodologies that are used in interpretive research according to Guba and Lincoln (1985) depend very much on the human as instrument for data collection. Patton (1980) asserts that qualitative research in the social sciences is:

> an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This

> undertaking is an end in itself, so it is not attempting to predict what would happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting--what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like in that particular setting--and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. . . . The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 1)

Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 9) see the use of qualitative research as a "means for better understanding a complex social phenomenon." Bogdan and Biklen (1992) regard qualitative research as having five characteristics:

1) it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument
2) qualitative research is descriptive.
3) researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4) researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5) meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. (p. 9)

In considering the tension between qualitative and quantitative methodologies in adult education in particular, Wikelund, Rider and Hart-Landsberg (1992) contend that:

> Too often, qualitative and quantitative methods are seen in opposition. Each has great value. They are best used to compliment each other, with quantitative data identifying broad social patterns and qualitative data discovering the meanings people share which underlie those patterns. (p. 23)

With respect to the quantitative methodological aspect of the study, the information collected through the questionnaires provided for numerical descriptions for the BALM program.

Case Study Constructs

The study design is a qualitative case study and therefore, descriptive and lends itself to inductive analysis. Merriam (1988) defines the qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case study is particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and relies heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources" (p.16). Yin (1994) describes a case study as a form of inquiry that:

1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
3) multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) conceptualize the case study as "a detailed examination of one setting or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 58). In their definition of appropriate constructs, Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest "a school, a program, a specific project, a net work, a family [or] community" (p. 7). Within my study, the area for exploration constituted one sub-project of the Let's Read Project--BALM. Merriam and Simpson (1984) note that within the case study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. In other words, the researcher assumes the major burden for collecting and processing data. The researcher actually goes to the site, the group of people or the institution--'the field'--to collect data.

Using the case study approach leads to an increased understanding of the phenomenon by clarifying concepts, generating hypotheses, or by constructing explanatory frameworks. The case study is an appropriate methodology to use where there is little knowledge about the problem. For instance, in cases where there is lack of theory, or if the existing theory does not adequately explain the phenomenon, hypotheses cannot be used to structure an investigation. Instead, the researcher goes into the field and studies as much of the problem as possible intending to interpret, explain, hypothesize or theorize about the phenomenon (Merriam and Simpson, 1984).

Seltiz (cited in Merriam and Simpson, 1984) called this type of research "insight-stimulating" and listed its functions as:

> formulating a problem for more precise investigation. . . developing hypotheses. . . increasing the investigator's familiarity with the phenomenon, clarifying concepts, establishing priorities for further research; gathering information about practical possibilities for carrying out research in real-life settings; providing a census of problems regarded as urgent by people working in a given field. (p. 91)

Further, Helmsladter (cited in Merriam and Simpson, 1984) suggests four other characteristics that he claims are "distinctive features" of a case study:

1) Dual function - The case study approach can be used as a research methodology to contribute to knowledge, or as a means of remedying or improving the situation.
2) Results are hypotheses. The traditional case study leads not to well-established conclusions, but rather to what might better be described as empirically developed hypotheses.
3) Flexibility. The investigator has a lot of freedom to decide what data to gather and the means by which the information will be collected and analyzed.
4) Application to trouble situations. A "frequent application of the case study approach is the study of people or situations which have gone awry." (p. 96)

With respect to my study, its purposes were to explore how the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program, and to suggest modifications if required (dual function). In addition, I used multiple data collection strategies (flexibility). I also contend that any conclusions of the study will be tentative rather than absolute (hypotheses).

Snow and Anderson (1991) also derived a set of characteristics for case studies. They suggest that case studies lend themselves to holistic analysis of bounded systems of action, multi-perceptual or polyphonic analyses, triangulated research, capturing social processes and open-ended research and serendipitous findings. My research incorporated multiple sources of data collection (triangulation), was opened-ended with respect to the interview questions and was multi-perceptual as it explored the perceptions of a range of different groups involved in BALM.

Since the case study is written in the narrative genre, it is a highly readable, descriptive picture of a phenomenon, which according to Patton (1980) makes "accessible to the reader all the information necessary to understand." It should "take the reader into the case situation, a person's life, a group's life, or a program's life" (p.134). I have attempted to write about my study in a manner so that those who participated could readily

understand it. In other words, I have attempted to avoid educational jargon in describing their experiences.

As with other research strategies, the case study has its strengths and limitations. Merriam and Simpson (1984) state that its strengths lie in offering large amounts of rich detailed information about a unit of a phenomenon; it is useful as supporting information for planning major investigations in that it often reveals important variables or hypotheses that help structure further research. In addition, these researchers contend that the case study allows the researcher the flexibility to understand and even to answer questions about educational processes and problems.

On the other hand, the case study as a methodology also has limitations. Conducting a case study can be expensive and time consuming. The lengthy form of narrative reporting tends to be problematic for policy-makers and others who may have little time to read these types of reports. Furthermore, the findings from the case study cannot be generalized in the same way as findings from random samples; generalizability is related to what each user is trying to learn from the study. Merriam (1988) also asserts that case studies are limited by the "sensitivity and integrity of the investigator" (pp. 33-34).

The focus of this case study research is on one unit of analysis, the adult literacy program (BALM), one component of the national Let's Read Project. While it is not an evaluation of the project, it attempts to reveal the effectiveness of the BALM component as expressed by those who participated in it at the grassroots level.

The Research Procedures

Grand Bahama and the Family Islands of Abaco, Andros and Exuma were the chosen sites for the study, islands where the BALM program has been in operation for some time. Participants in the study included coordinators, tutors and learners who were involved in the program on the various islands.

In order to meet the respondents, I flew to the islands of Grand Bahama, Abaco, Andros and Exuma because I lived in Nassau. Organizing my travel proved to be a

challenge. It was sometimes difficult to get confirmed reservations when I needed them as it was the 'peak season' for the National Airline. Bahamians travel extensively during the summer months throughout the islands. This is the time when parents send their children to spend the holidays with relatives living on the various islands. The parents are usually on holiday themselves and they, too, return to their island homes. However, I was able to spend time on each island meeting with and discussing the participants' perspectives on BALM.

It is important to mention here that the timing may have posed a problem as far as the number of participants was concerned. Many of the coordinators and tutors were teachers, so the adult literacy programs coincided with the school year. Unfortunately, I was not aware of this issue when I prepared to conduct my study. During the summer months, many of the teachers left the islands immediately after school closed for their various homes which were either on other islands or out of the country. Usually, they were away for the entire summer.

As for the learners, a number of them had jobs which required traveling, or they were on the shift system which made it difficult for them to get away from work to participate. Some of them had to move from island to island or throughout the cays, wherever there were available jobs. In addition, it was also vacation time for some learners.

I spent three days on Exuma conducting interviews. These interviews were arranged by the coordinator who was able to set them up to fit in with the participants' schedules. I conducted a total of four interviews there: one individual interview with the coordinator, one group interview with the tutors, one individual interview and one group interview with the learners.

I flew to Andros and spent a day interviewing on that island. It was possible to complete the interviews in one day because everybody who participated in the study lived in the same community. The coordinator was able to set up the interviews in such a way

that I was able to conduct them and still have sufficient time to catch my return flight. I conducted a total of five interviews on Andros Island: one individual interview with the coordinator, one group interview with the tutors, two individual interviews and one group interview with the learners.

Initially, it appeared as though I would not be able to include Abaco as one of the sites as I was led to understand that there was no program there. However, after many telephone calls and fortunately coming in contact with a friend who lived on the island, I was assured that there was indeed a program on that island. Traveling to Abaco was initially delayed because the coordinator was out of the country, and my other contact who knew all of the learners was away on holiday. Finally, the trip was organized and the interview schedules arranged. I spent two days on Abaco interviewing participants. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to make a second trip there to complete the interviews. I conducted four interviews on the island: one individual interview with the coordinator; one group interview with the tutors; one individual interview and one group interview with the learners. In addition, I conducted a telephone interview with one tutor from Abaco upon my return to Canada, something I had not initially anticipated. She is a winter resident on the island and was out of the country for the summer. However, the coordinator had suggested that I contact her.

Three days were spent on Grand Bahama. The early part of the first day involved contacting those persons whom the coordinator and the District superintendent had identified as willing to participate and setting up interview times to fit the participants' schedules. The tutors' interviews were conducted in the late morning of the first day. On the second day of my visit, I conducted the learners' and coordinator's interviews. Interview sessions lasted well into the evening. They were held in a central location in the city that was easily accessible to the participants. I had one individual interview with the coordinator; one individual and one group interview with the tutors; three individual interviews and one group interview with the learners for a total of seven interviews.

1. The Participants

(a) The Coordinators

All of the coordinators on the four chosen islands participated in the research. There was one coordinator on each island for a total of four. I first contacted the Secretariat in Nassau for information including; (1) the number, (2) names, and (3) telephone numbers of the coordinators on each island. Due to the illness of the Let's Read Project coordinator in Nassau, it was difficult to obtain the required information. As each Family Island was responsible for its own program, up-to-date coordinator information was unfortunately not available for these locations.

Eventually, I contacted the District Superintendents (the persons responsible for all the public schools on the islands) on the chosen Family Islands and in Grand Bahama in anticipation that they would be able to provide me with the necessary coordinator information. These District Superintendents were in the center of activities within the community and spear-headed many of the activities initiated by the Ministry of Education on the islands. The superintendents located and spoke with the coordinators on their respective islands and forwarded the information to me. Subsequently, I made personal contact with the coordinators by way of long distance telephone calls. I explained to them the nature of the research and solicited their support and participation. They all expressed an interest in and a willingness to participate in the study.

After my initial contact with the coordinators, I spent time on the telephone organizing and setting up interview schedules. Once dates and times were confirmed, I flew to the various islands where I met with and interviewed them. Each of the program coordinators was interviewed individually. Focused questions for the interviews (See Appendix B) centered upon program issues and program evaluation. Each interview lasted approximately one to one and one half hours. The coordinators were encouraged to provide their own perspectives on adult literacy teaching and learning and to address issues which were not presented within the focused questions. Interviews were conducted at

schools, churches, homes, in offices, and places that were convenient and accessible to the participants. Two of the four coordinators were female. Each coordinator consented in writing to his/her participation in the study (See Appendix E).

(b) The Tutors

On the Family Islands and Grand Bahama, the coordinators also served as tutors. However, Exuma was the only island where the coordinator played a duel role in the research. In other words, she was the only respondent who was interviewed as both a coordinator and as a tutor. The coordinators knew which tutors were available on the islands. The coordinator on each island contacted the tutors to see if they would participate. A total of four of six tutors in Exuma, three of three tutors in Abaco, two of two tutors in Andros, and nine of seventy-one tutors in Grand Bahama participated in the study. The names and telephone numbers of all the tutors who participated in the study were provided by the coordinators on the Family Islands.

On Grand Bahama, once the coordinator contacted the tutors, I was provided with a list of all those who agreed to be a part of the research. Upon my arrival on the island, I also contacted the nine tutors to confirm interview times. Due to the small number of tutors on the Family Islands, I interviewed all those who indicated to the coordinators that they wanted to be a part of the study.

Tutors were given the option of individual interviews. Except for one individual tutor interview on one of the islands (because of scheduling), all interviews were group interviews which lasted from one to almost three hours. Questions for the tutors' interviews included focused, open-ended questions to determine their experiences in the BALM program (See Appendix C). Tutors consented to participation in the study in writing (See Appendix E).

(c) The Learners

I obtained a list of all learners who volunteered to be interviewed on each of the Family Islands and Grand Bahama from the coordinators. While Grand Bahama had

substantially larger numbers of learners in its program, it was more difficult to get students from that location to participate. On this island, learners were concerned about confidentiality. They did not want others to know that they were in the program. In-spite of assurances with respect to anonymity and confidentiality, several learners continued to indicate a reluctance to participate. Two of the 7 learners who volunteered did not show up for the interviews. Therefore, fewer students than originally intended elected to be involved in the research.

As in the case of the tutors, the coordinators on each island made the initial contact with the students. However, on one of the islands where the coordinator was not available initially, the principal of the high school in the community who worked very closely with the coordinator made the contact with the students and arranged for the interviews. Once the coordinators explained the purpose of the study to the students, they compiled lists for me of those students who were available and interested in participating in the study. I subsequently used those lists of names to confirm and arrange for the interviews.

In Abaco, from a total of twenty-five students, four students participated in the study. In Andros five students were interviewed from a possible total of twenty. Six of the possible thirteen students in Exuma participated in the study. In Grand Bahama, five of the sixty-four students participated. Each student consented to his/her participation in the study in writing (See Appendix E).

Meeting with the students was not too difficult on most of the islands once I had scheduled the interviews to fit with the times that they were available. There was one instance where a student wanted to be a part of the study and wished to participate in a group interview. However, due to circumstances, she was unable to schedule her time for the group interview. She did consent to an individual interview.

On most islands the students were willing to participate and considered it a privilege to be a part of the research. Each student group interview lasted approximately one to one-

and-one-half hours. Students were advised that if they wished an individual interview, I would be available to accommodate them. Questions for the student interviews included both focused and opened-ended questions to determine their perspectives of their experiences in the BALM program (See Appendix D). Table 1 provides a summary of numbers of participants from each group that comprised the sample for the study.

Table 1

Summary of Number of Participants Comprising the Sample for the Study

Islands	Coordinators	Tutors		Students	
		Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual
Abaco	1	3	3	25	4
Andros	1	2	2	20	5
Exuma	1	6	4	13	6
Grand Bahama	1	71	9	64	5
Total	4	82	18	122	20

2. Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were: (a) Questionnaires, (b) Interviews, (c) Documentation, and, (d) Reflective Journal.

(a) Questionnaires

For the researcher, surveying is the most extensive data-gathering technique available. Questionnaires are the written form of a survey and they provide particular advantages to the researcher. There are generally two types of questionnaires, the open ended or closed questionnaire.

Like all other techniques, survey research has advantages and limitations. They are usually accurate and very convenient. Through the use of quantification, accuracy in measurement is enhanced.

The questionnaire is the most widely used technique for gathering data in the field of educational research (Udinsky, Osterlind, and Lynch, 1981). There is extensive literature on the development and design of questionnaires as well as procedures for analyzing the data they contain. For example, these researchers maintain that it is important to define the research problem and list the specific objectives to be achieved by the questionnaires, making sure that the targeted population for which the sample is selected is identified and that there is also careful construction and administration of the questionnaire.

For my study, I chose a combination of the open and closed questionnaire for the coordinators as it allowed the respondents greater latitude to provide a wider variety of responses (See Appendix A). The open-ended portion also allowed me to code and develop categories from the responses.

The survey questionnaire was designed to gather data concerning the adult literacy program in the Bahamas (BALM), the current status of program evaluation in literacy programs, and the coordinators' views regarding the viability of established literacy program evaluation policy in the Bahamas. It consisted of 35 items containing both open-ended and closed questions. The majority of the questions required respondents to check the most appropriate answers.

Pretesting of the coordinators' questionnaire was not necessary for I adapted it from the work of Thomas (cited in Jackson, 1992). I included questions to obtain demographic information concerning the program that I considered necessary in the Bahamian context. The questionnaire was distributed to the coordinators of the program on the designated islands during our initial meeting. It was designed to collect demographic information with respect to tutors and students as well as other pertinent program information (e.g., tutor training, number of students, length of program, resources, etc.). Each questionnaire was completed and collected before I left each island.

Questionnaire items 1 through 13 were designed to gather demographic information relating to the literacy program, tutors, students and job related information concerning the

literacy coordinators. Questions 14, 15, and 16 were concerned with program funding. In questions 17 to 19 information was required concerning advisory boards in the literacy programs. Question 20 to 28 asked the coordinators to give a brief explanation of what program evaluation meant to them, as it applied to an adult literacy program.

All coordinators were expected to answer the final seven questions. Items 29 to 32 were concerned with informal feedback about the programs. The final three questions required information about formal evaluation-planning and implementing program evaluation policy for literacy programs in the Bahamas.

I also developed a student questionnaire (See Appendix F) for the purpose of ascertaining more personal information for each student: age, place of birth, address, marital status, number of children, level of education, employment status, current and past occupation and monthly income. I felt that some of this information might not have been available from the coordinators and I felt that perhaps that information might be valuable when making inferences or decisions about the learners. These questionnaires were distributed and completed before the student interviews. To assure that all learners understood what was being asked, I went through it with them because I did not know what the learners' reading abilities were and I did not want to risk embarrassing anyone. This exercise took about fifteen minutes to complete. All student questionnaires were collected.

A tutors' questionnaire was not deemed necessary as I felt that the pertinent information about tutors was provided through the coordinators' questionnaires.

(b) Interviews

The interview is one of the more popular means of collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 1988). Interviews can be more accurate than questionnaires, the participation rate is generally greater, and they generate more information because people seem to talk more freely than they write. Interviewing gave me the opportunity to probe into the experiences, concerns and problems of the participants. As Patton (1980) explains:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We can not observe behavior that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interview, then is to allow us to enter the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Yin (1994) asserts that one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview, and these interviews are usually open-ended in nature. I used individual as well as group interviews, often referred to as 'focus groups' in the literature (Bell, 1987; Bodgan and Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Merton et al., 1990; Morgan, 1988; Stewart and Shamdassani, 1990; Udinsky et al., 1981; Yin, 1994). Merton et al. (1990) suggest that in the focused interview, those persons being interviewed "are known to have been involved in a particular situation" (p. 25). Important aspects of the topic being studied would have undergone initial analysis by the investigator, and an interview guide prepared and constructed to focus on the subjective experiences of the persons exposed to the pre-analyzed situation in order to ascertain their definition of the situation. I had examined the pertinent documentation with respect to BALM prior to the commencement of the study. In addition, my interviews with the coordinators assisted me in developing an overview of the program offered on each site.

There are many advantages to using group interviews. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) interviews: (a) are cost and time effective; (b) allow for direct interaction with participants; (c) provide the opportunity to obtain a great deal of data; (d) are flexible; and, (e) provide results which are very easy to understand. Group interviews can also stimulate new ideas among participants, as well as promote greater spontaneity and candor. Udinsky et. al. (1981) contend that respondents who are uncomfortable and inarticulate in the presence of the interviewer may open up in a group interview because they are supported by their colleagues and can direct their comments to each other as well as the person in control. While there are limitations to this method, Morgan (1988)

maintains that the main advantage of using focus groups is to have the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a short period of time.

According to Bell (1987), "the major advantage of the interview is its adaptability" (p. 71). So much information can be ascertained depending on how the respondents respond during an interview,

> the facial expressions, the pause or even the tone of voice, all this will be hidden in a written response. While the responses given on questionnaires have to be taken at face value, the response given in an interview can be developed and clarified. (p. 71)

As an interviewer, I was able to probe for responses, follow-up on ideas, and investigate the motives and feelings of the interviewees, something that I could not do with a questionnaire.

All interviews were semi-structured and informal, consisting of open-ended questions based on the major purpose of the study. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the informal interviews allowed me to elicit authentic information from the participants through purposeful conversations about their experiences in the program. The interview sessions were audio-taped for the purpose of later transcription and coding of information. After I explained the reason for using the recorder, participants accepted its use and did not appear intimated by it in any way. Furthermore, although I had a prepared list of questions, in most cases the questions were not posed in one particular order. Rather, I encouraged participants to discuss their experiences and only posed a particular question if I thought that issue had not been addressed.

It is important to note that because of the frequent requests for anonymity when enrolled in an adult literacy program, I was particularly sensitive in relation to my request for learner-group interviews. In other words, focused group interviews depended on the learners' comfort level in coming together. Surprisingly, on the majority of the islands, this was not a great issue. Learners wanted to be a part of the group interview, maybe for

the moral support that it afforded or they felt comfortable expressing their views and ideas with the others being there.

All the interviews took place in the summer months when the average temperature in the Bahamas ranges from twenty-eight to thirty-two degrees Celsius. Because of the heat and the demands on the respondents' time, interviews were held in a variety of locations. On Exuma, the coordinator's interview took place in the Guidance Counselor's office at the high school where it was cool and comfortable. Interviewing took place at the church on Andros (the church responsible for organizing the adult program). This building was also air-conditioned, thereby providing conducive conditions for the task. My first meeting with the coordinator on Abaco was at a yacht club over looking the harbour. The setting lent itself to a very relaxed atmosphere as we talked and enjoyed the "balmy breezes." On the second occasion when the actual interview took place, we met at the coordinator's home, on the verandah, where it was cool and comfortable. On Grand Bahama, the coordinator was also overseeing the summer school program at her church. Hence, the interview took place there, outside, under the pavilion.

The tutors were interviewed in group settings, however, there was one individual tutor interview. On the island of Exuma, the four tutors agreed to a group interview. It was held at the high school in the Guidance Counselor's office to avoid any disruptions. It was a comfortable setting. The tutors' interview on Andros was also a group interview which took place on the beach near the church. This was the site they requested. The tutors on Abaco agreed to a group interview which was held in the Principal's office at the high school. On Grand Bahama, all interviews were held in a central location which was familiar to the participants and easily accessible--the office of the District Superintendent. It was a spacious, centrally air-conditioned room and very comfortable. The interviews lasted from one to almost three hours.

There were individual and learner group interviews on all of the islands. On the island of Exuma, the learner group interview was held at the primary school in the

community. The individual interview was held at the participant's home. On Abaco, the learners' group interview took place in the Principal's office at the high school while the individual interview was at the home of the learner. All learner interviews on Andros were held at the Bahamas Faith Center (the church responsible for organizing the program). On Grand Bahama, learner interviews were held at the office of the District Superintendent. These learner interviews lasted from one to one and one half hours.

(c) Documentation

Yin (1994) suggests that the most important use of documents is that they can be used in conjunction with other sources of information, such as interviews to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. He contends that they are helpful in verifying the correct spelling and titles or names of organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview. They can also provide specific details to corroborate information from other sources. Inferences can also be made from documents, giving clues for further investigations. Because of their over all value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case studies.

Before I commenced data collection, I reviewed and examined all the official documents made available to me through the secretariat and on-site by the coordinators. This process involved gathering information pertaining to the over all project including initial and on going proposals, specific information concerning programs on the Family Islands, and the activities related to the various programs. I also examined other documents such as coordinators' program records, tutor training materials and tutors' resource materials. I did not have the opportunity to look at any learners' work as the tutors had not yet sent in their reports which were supposed to include samples of learners' work. On the island where the Laubach approach was being used, learners were provided with work books. None of the learners who were using the Laubach materials had their work books with them.

(d) Reflective Journal

Journals are kept by researchers because they are helpful in keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of work in progress, for reflecting on previous reflections and for making the activities of research themselves topics for study (Van Manen, 1990). They are a means of recording reflective accounts of human experiences. Van Manen further contends that journal keeping is a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying and making explicit the structure of meaning. It is necessary to view lived experiences in meaning units, or themes. One can reflect on lived experiences by reflectively analyzing the thematic aspects of the experiences.

Table 2

An Overview of the Data Collection Procedures

Participants	Data Collection Techniques	Time
Four Coordinators	Questionnaires	
	Program Documents	
	Individual Interviews	1 - 1 1/2 hours
Eighteen Tutors	Group Interviews (4)	1 -3 hours
	Individual Interviews (1)	1 hour
	Resource Materials	
Twenty Students	Questionnaires	
	Group Interviews	1 - 1 1/2 hours
	Individual Interviews	1 - 1 1/2 hours
Researcher	Reflective Journal	on-going

Spradley (1980) states that keeping a field work journal is a means of recording ideas, fears, mistakes, confusion, breakthroughs, and problems that may arise during field work. Craig (1983), a proponent of personal journal writing, sees the journal as an avenue for self-discovery and growth. She further suggests that it could be used for reflective

writing, which was appropriate for my purpose. As a research tool, a journal can be helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of work in progress and for thinking about previous reflections (Van Manen, 1990). Keeping a reflective journal afforded me the opportunity to evaluate my thinking and to identify my biases and shortcomings.

I kept a reflective journal for the duration of the study in which I recorded my reflections on the interviews after they took place and how the information was supported or not supported by the literature. There were times when I found it almost impossible to do my reflections immediately after interviews for they lasted all day and well into the evenings. While transcribing the interviews, however, I reflected constantly on what the participants said. Table 2 provides an overview of the data collection and of the data procedures.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). These researchers posit that it does not proceed neatly or in a linear fashion. When explaining the term 'data analysis,' Bodgan and Biklen (1992) state that it "involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it , searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). Qualitative data analysis is a means of searching for general statements about relationships among categories of data (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). It is extremely complex and cannot easily be converted into standard measurable units of objects. Marshall and Rossman (1989) postulate that the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them.

As Patton (1980) proposes:

> The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer volumes of information with which they will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. (p. 297)

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest two approaches to analyzing qualitative data. In one instance, the analysis occurs concurrently with data collection. By the time data collection is completed the analysis would be complete. Usually, more experienced researchers adopt this approach. In the second approach, the researcher waits until the data collection is completed before analyzing the data. Being a novice in the field of research, I opted to analyze the bulk of the data after all the data were collected. However, during the actual collection of the data, I did some initial analysis as I listened to the tapes after each interview or recorded the events that took place. In addition, I reflected upon the conversations in my reflective journal.

Transcribing the tapes proved to be quite a challenge. It was my first experience transcribing, and as Patton (1980) stated like many researchers I was not prepared for the volume of information. The task was very tedious and time consuming, but I felt that it was important for me to do the transcribing so that I could re-live the interviews and listen to the voices of each participant, allowing for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. By personally transcribing the audiotapes, I was able to search for themes and patterns and write down words and phrases to represent those themes and patterns. These words and phrases later became coding categories which I used throughout the data analysis process of the study. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) indicate, devising categories suggests both convergent and divergent thinking as the researcher determines what aspects of the data to fit into a single category or theme, and then fleshes out the categories once they have been identified.

To establish credibility, once a set of codes were established from all the sources, I asked a colleague, as Guba and Lincoln (1981) propose, to "audit" them. He was also asked to read the transcriptions of the interviews and my journal, to determine whether my

categorization of the themes were in keeping with "commonly accepted practice" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p.186). Whereas credibility involves establishing a method that enables an independent reader to believe in the interpretation of the data, Bodgan and Biklen (1992) assert that it does not mean that the study needs to be replicated by another researcher. To further ensure credibility, I made use of all the techniques available to me to gather the data necessary to complete the study. Additionally, the data analysis was conducted over a six month period, allowing me time to discuss and reflect upon it and have it reviewed by another doctoral student. Such procedures support the validity of the analysis.

By using multiple methods including focused interviews, document analysis, questionnaires, and my reflective journal, I employed the process which Denzin (1989) called "data triangulation." Triangulation is a means of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point. Data from various sources can be used to elaborate and illuminate the research question. Using multiple sources of data collection can only strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Addressing the concern of transferability of the study, I used, as Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest "rich, thick description"--the attributes necessary for a reader to understand the findings of the study.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The results of this study may not be generalizable to BALM participants on all Family Islands nor to BALM participants in Nassau.

The tutor and learner respondents were selected by the program coordinator on each of the Family Islands. The experiences and perspectives of these respondents may not be experiences and perspectives of all tutors and learners on each island. Respondents may have sought to represent their program in the most favourable light rather than with total openness.

The results of the study may be subject to participants' attitudes towards and the degree to which they responded accurately to the questionnaire. Furthermore, respondents'

perspectives, as presented during the interviews, may reflect information that they thought the interviewer wanted to hear rather than what they believed.

It should be noted that the majority of the learner respondents were female, with an average age of 35 years. No respondents came from the Haitian community or other ethnic groups found in the Bahamas. Sixteen of the 20 learner respondents were employed full time.

It should be noted that only participants from four Family Islands were the focus for this research. Furthermore, no program participants who had dropped out of a program were included as respondents.

Ethical Considerations

Concern regarding the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the information they provided was given priority. All participants were asked to sign a consent form. They were also informed that if questions asked in the interviews or on the questionnaires made them uncomfortable they did not have to answer them. I explained to them that if at anytime they no longer wished to participate in the study, they were free to withdraw. Also, all of the tapes, transcriptions, computer disks and my reflective journal were kept in a safe place in my home. Participants were given pseudo names in the report as every effort was made to lessen the risk of identifying the subjects in this research study.

Summary

This chapter has presented the research framework and the research procedures that include: (a) participants, (b) data collection methodologies, and (c) data analysis techniques. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study as well as the discussion of those results.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study. The following four major themes emerged from the data: (a) participatory stances; (b) program influence; (c) instructional initiatives; and, (d) evaluation. Each of these themes includes several subthemes. The findings that relate to a particular theme and its subthemes are initially presented. Subsequently, a discussion is provided on the theme before the next theme is presented. The chapter concludes with an overview of the findings.

Participatory Stances

As the respondents talked about their experiences in BALM, their perspectives for their participation within the program addressed two separate concepts: (a) self-improvement/satisfaction, and, (b) reluctance and retention. These concepts will be addressed below.

Self-improvement/Satisfaction

The motivation of learners to participate in a literacy program was generally linked to self-improvement and self-satisfaction. Although participants indicated clearly that their local literacy program provided them with novel opportunities to improve their educational abilities, and to increase their feelings of self-worth, or to extend their understanding of changes within their communities, a strong learner motive for participation across all island contexts was the opportunity to improve reading abilities.

Respondents spoke at length about their desire to improve their reading abilities. Comments such as the following were frequent:

> I wanted to be able to read better and understand everything I read and not having to ask others to explain something.
>
> I wanted to better equip myself, improve my reading and be able to do things for myself.
>
> I wanted to improve my reading condition. . . so I decided to come out and improve my reading ability. I could read but my problem is spelling. Some of the spelling I don't get it right.

> I wanted to improve my reading.

An energetic woman who was very excited about the program said:

> I joined it for the reading part because I socialize with the church. I have a ministry in church and I really want to read much better so that I could explain [things] to my women folks much better.

Learners from the various islands expressed similar sentiments. A 57 year old woman noted:

> I felt as if I was not able to read as clearly as I would like. Being involved in the church and after being chosen Mother of The Year for the church I said well, I don't know when I'll have to give a speech and rather than reading the wrong words at the wrong times I decided to go.

Tutor and coordinator interviewees also gave their views on learners' participation in literacy programs. They agreed that the learners' greatest motivation was to learn to read. One coordinator captured the comments of her peers when she noted: "I think that for many people, you know, their motivation is just the reading."

The tutors indicated that because of the learners' strong Christian persuasion, many of them joined because they wanted to be able to read the Bible. One tutor remarked:

> If they did not succeed in anything else at all, if they can manage to plow through the Bible in their life [time] they would have achieved something and that's all some of them [the learners] need to get through life.

A tutor claimed, "My student really wanted to further her reading. . . because of the kind of job that she had. She wanted to improve because she had to give talks." Another instructor noted that if learners were out of a job, they would come and say, "Oh, I need to learn to read."

On one of the islands the tutors felt that the non-readers were motivated because they wanted to include literacy in their lives. One tutor assumed that:

> They felt the need for it in their lives. They had to do it because they wanted to advance. . . There were needs in all kinds of ways. Socially, if people here felt that okay, socially they need to be able to read because they would be mixing with different kinds of people somehow, whatever

> their jobs are. So they need to be able to read for their personal advancement.

Another tutor who worked with a group of non-readers said that:

> The word went out and a couple of people started the program. When others [in the community] saw the new learners [attending classes] they wanted to know what they were doing. Once the others discovered that these people were learning to read, it motivated the others [to want to learn to read] so they started coming too.

This tutor was convinced that the group of students that she worked with really wanted to learn to read. She believed that they were determined to learn. Other tutors shared this sentiment. It is not surprising that all of the learners wanted to learn how to read or to improve their reading. Reading is something that they encounter in their daily living and has meaning for them. Living on the islands where, in many cases there is not very much activity going on, reading is a major past-time. For most citizens, being able to read the Bible would be sufficient.

The tutors themselves were also motivated to offer their services within a literacy program. Many of the tutors confirmed that they knew of persons who were having problems with reading and they wanted to help them. One tutor claimed that she knew of persons who could not read very well and she felt that they would benefit from the program. To assure that they did, she decided to become a tutor. Another indicated that she was motivated because she also knew of a person who was having problems with reading. "I knew how difficult life was for that person [so] I decided that I wanted to help people in that person's situation." She was also convinced that everybody should be given the chance to enjoy reading and she wanted to help them develop as readers. There was one tutor who said:

> I felt sorry for those people who really wanted to learn to read the Bible. It was the only thing that a lot of them wanted to do and they did not have anyone at home to assist them.

She wanted to assist them in exploring this religious text. Another explained that:

> There were two people in church, and it was kind of embarrassing because I had asked one to read not knowing that she couldn't. . . I gradually began to realize that it wasn't a matter that they couldn't see. Then I found out that they could not read.

One particular tutor suggested that the tutoring motivated her to become a reading teacher and that she had already enrolled in educational courses:

> Because I really want to see adult illiteracy eradicated completely. You know you [need] to get to the root of the problem while they are still young. It really motivated me to do that.

Another tutor was surprised to discover that there were people over the age of forty who could not read:

> Well, I'm fairly new at this but it is amazing to me that the people that I am tutoring are forty and over and a lot of them can't read. I don't know how they made it all these years without being able to read and they are functioning. One of my students is a guy who paints cars and his problem was reading the different colors and mixing the different paints in order to come up with the different color.

She also commented that many adults had asked her to help them because they wanted to learn how to read.

All of the tutors and coordinators knew of persons in the community who were either non-readers or persons needing to improve their reading skills. Their desire to help these people seemed to be their greatest motivation for participating in the program. This confirms the observation of one coordinator who maintains that, "Whenever people decide to become tutors, they usually have one or two persons in mind who cannot read whom they would like to tutor."

In addition to their desire to be competent readers, respondents were also motivated to improve their educational standing. A young learner commented:

> I became involved in the program because I thought that I would hopefully up-grade myself and be more experienced. I didn't want to stay at that level, so I enrolled in the program.

Others claimed that they did not get very far in school or did not complete high school. They thought that the program would help them. Not having completed high school was a common concern for those living on the Family Islands up to and during the mid sixties. There were few or no high schools on the islands. The mandatory school leaving age at that time was 14. Parents would take their children, especially their sons, out of school at a very early age and send them to Nassau in search of jobs in order to help support the rest of the family. The more mature learners were able to identify with these decisions and they willingly talked about those experiences. They hardly ever attended school because their families were moving from place to place, particularly through the cays because they were farmers. There were no schools on the cays. So the children worked the farms instead. In other words, it was not their wish not to attend school; circumstances impacted on availability and accessibility to high school. A male learner vividly explained:

> My father felt that since his parents took him out of school at age 14, he felt that we should leave school at age 14 too. I was in grade 8 or 9 at the time when I left school. He felt that it was time to go to work. I think that he made a grave mistake by doing this to all of his children. I felt--after a while I realized that he could only pass on what he had been taught and he did not realize what he was doing to his kids. It would have been better if they could have completed.

Remembering what the educational system was like, other learners confirmed the view above:

> You know, maybe not in the later years, but in those days in the primary schools it didn't matter what grade you were in at age 14. You had to leave school.
>
> We didn't have the opportunities in those days you see. The opportunities were not there. When we were 14 you didn't have a choice, you had to move out. You had to leave school. It wasn't our fault because that was all there was.

A learner who had the opportunity to attend high school explained:

> Well, I'm a little behind as far as the educational process [is concerned] because I left school in the eleventh grade, not that I wasn't doing well but I missed the exam part of it. It would be good if they could really bring that back.

One of the younger participants said:

> It's been some time since I've been in school so I said that this was a good chance for me to catch up, when you are out of school. I didn't complete the subjects and you tend to forget what you already know. It was like for me to refresh my mind and be up-dated with what is happening now.

One learner in a program on another island shared the same sentiment, "I joined because I am young and I didn't get very far in school. I thought that this would have helped me." Another stated, "I thought it was very educational. . . I wanted to learn a lot from it." A more mature woman said, "I wanted to learn some more. . . I am not too old to learn. . . so I joined this [program] to help me with whatever."

All of the learners interviewed indicated that they wanted to continue their education. Some were interested in completing high school, writing the Bahamas Junior Certificate and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. One respondent suggested that:

> They [the coordinators and tutors] could expand the program and we could come out with our BJC's. I would really like that. My husband always asks me where I am going. He wants to know why I am going to school and not learning anything. I told him that I'm learning a lot and that, when I pass my BJC's, I gonna teach him.

Another respondent suggested that for those who dropped out of school and did not do so well in their examinations, the program could be an avenue for them to study and rewrite them.

Others wanted to go on to college. In fact, three of the participants were already enrolled in college courses, and they attributed that achievement to having been a part of the literacy program. A young lady said:

> Right now, I'm enrolled in the College of The Bahamas Early Childhood Education Program. The class work [in the literacy program] has helped me a lot because some things that they [tutors] taught us were able to help me with what I'm learning now.

In addition to respondents speaking specifically about extending their educational achievements and reading abilities, learners also expressed the desire to carry out more

efficiently their daily business activities as a motivation to join the program. For example, all of the learners, because they often travel abroad, wanted to learn how to fill correctly application, customs, immigration and also bank loan forms. Others, on the other hand, were interested in being able to sign their own cheques. One learner respondent shared the following:

> There are people who cannot spell or sign their names or anything. There are persons who have to depend on others for filling out forms at the bank, filling out forms for travel, they are not able to do it.

Another learner said that:

> As simple as filling out a form at the school, parents can not do that. They would send them back, because they cannot complete them. Once while traveling there was this lady who had an immigration form, I saw her starring at me, but she wouldn't ask. But I had an idea of what was going on so I asked her if she wanted me to fill it out for her and she was so thankful. She hated to ask because she did not want me to know that she couldn't fill it out.

Tutors and coordinators mentioned that all the learners were interested in completing forms correctly. In those programs where this aspect was not a major part of the instruction, filling in of forms was done whenever the need arose. A tutor explained:

> I had a learner whom I thought had a learning disability, but he wanted to be able to fill out the customs and immigration forms and the deposit and withdrawal slips at the bank. He also had problems reading the aisle markers in the food store because these had been changed.

One tutor said, "One of my learners was being promoted and he had to learn how to write a receipt correctly as writing receipts was going to be a part of his job responsibility." Other tutors reported that their learners also expressed the need to be able to complete various forms correctly.

One of the coordinators said that they used the slow summer period to concentrate on the more functional aspects of print for those who were interested and available. On other islands, these aspects were an integral part of the program. In fact, in one particular

program, daily literacy demands were the main focus because learners were interested in and requested such assistance.

Another tutor wanting to stress the importance of this aspect shared her experience:

> As I move around the various communities in different situations, I see people actually struggling with stuff. For example the forms at the [health] clinic. I know that I've been at the clinic many times and the nurse just comes out, gives patients a form and asks them to fill it out. You see people who have just left school and you see older people, they just sit down and stare at it, or they make some excuse. But I feel that that shouldn't be, you shouldn't have to make up excuses for something as simple as that. Then you go into the bank and young people don't know how to fill out the deposit or withdrawal forms. When traveling you meet people who cannot complete the necessary forms.

A coordinator pointed out that, "Some learners were concerned with filling out job application forms, writing resumes, business letters and preparing for job interviews." One learner said that since there were no non-readers in her program, "I suggested that we do on the job training. . . like writing resumes and preparing for an actual interview." She explained that she had been on an interview before and she felt lost. It was her first interview and she did not know what to expect.

Other respondents were motivated to participate in the program because they wanted to improve their vocabulary. There were also those who were concerned with improving their English (their communication skills), to refresh their minds and to become updated with what was happening within the community and across the country. One learner stated that he was motivated because he wanted to improve:

> For traveling and speaking to the public, speaking in our country, out of our country, speaking to students and persons that are up-to-date. I have to make sure that I'm always upgrading to be in touch with [what's going on] now.

These learners live in very small communities. During our conversations, I discovered that several were very active in their communities. Therefore, they saw the program as a means by which they would be able to speak in front of an audience with greater confidence.

The topic of functional activities as a motivator was also addressed by tutors and coordinators. When I asked the former what motivated them to become tutors, a common response was that they came into contact with people on the job with certain needs and they wanted to help them. One mentioned that:

> I always come in contact with persons at work who have certain needs. Filling out bank loan forms could be very difficult. Once, I was helping someone to complete one and I had to call the bank to clarify certain things myself.

Tutors and coordinators mentioned that their involvement in the program was to do something for the community. One tutor stressed, "It was not the money we were after. It was something we wanted to do and it came from the bottom of our hearts."

On another island, the tutors told me that they realized that there was a need in the community. They knew of parents who were unable to help their children with their homework. They also pointed out to me that many of the school-aged children lived with their grandparents. Tutors felt that these grandparents may not have had the opportunity to attend school themselves and, therefore, needed help as home tutors for their grandchildren. As noted previously, helping their children with their homework, however, did not appear to be a learner concern.

Reluctance and Retention

Two major concerns for adult literacy organizers are reluctance and retention of learners in the programs. Reluctance in this instance means an unwillingness, hesitation or a disinclination to become a part of the literacy program. Retention, on the other hand, refers to organizers being able to maintain the learners within a program. Both of these topics are addressed in this section for they are closely related and sometimes even overlap. Even when literacy programs are available to them, many adults choose not to or are reluctant to participate. Participants in this study expressed their views on reluctance as it pertains to learners in the adult literacy programs. Reasons for reluctance to participate varied from shame, scheduling difficulties, program availability, personal obligations, to seeing little need for literacy. The greatest barrier to participation in adult literacy programs

within the island contexts as noted by the respondents centered upon shame or embarrassment.

When learners suggested reasons why peers could be reluctant to become a part of literacy programs, the following comments were frequent:

> They [the learners] might feel uncomfortable coming forth because they will be exposing themselves. They [Learners] are ashamed that other [people] will find out that they cannot read.
>
> There are other people who are shy or embarrassed and don't want others to know that they are functionally illiterate.

An older participant opined that, "They are ashamed that others would think they are dumb and they will feel embarrassed." She also shared a very personal experience:

> There was a time when I felt embarrassed, but I don't now. I tell them [her children] that if you hear me saying something wrong, correct me. That's what you all are here for. You had more privileges than I had, but now that you have it, you share it with me. One day, I was using a word in the wrong way and my daughter told me that it was not correct. So she corrected me. I walked away and tried to use the sentence, so when I say it again I will say it right.

A young learner addressed the idea of embarrassment very succinctly:

> There are other young people in the community who can benefit from the programs. They need literacy, but some of them would put self-pride [before the need] and they wouldn't come to classes. They are embarrassed. They don't know [how to read] but they just let pride get in the way rather that come in.

A young and exuberant woman also suggested that embarrassment could be a factor in the reluctance of adults to participate in the literacy programs. With a sense of urgency in her voice she explained:

> Some people may have heard about the program but they are too embarrassed to come out. . . I work with people at the hotel who couldn't even read the schedule. You have to tell them every day, whenever the schedule goes up, whatever change is on it. You have to tell them not to come to work on this shift or on the next shift. . . There are a lot of people working in the hotels <u>who can't read</u>. You know when someone cannot read his own name on the schedule. . . I thank God that I could read but there are some <u>who can't read at all</u>. So, they need to get some pamphlets and make it

> more open [the program] because some people are embarrassed.

When asked to explain what she meant by "make it more open," she continued enthusiastically:

> When I say make it open--a secret could only hurt you as long as you keep it [the shame]. I could read what it says on that cup. Someone else who can't read at all may just say that it is a drinking cup. . . You could have bleach in that cup. They don't know. Unless they smell it they will think it is a drink. When the program starts in September they should send out pamphlets to the hotels. Stick them up by the security gate like a flyer inviting them [to join] if they are interested. They can just phone, because it is private. . . They don't have to be embarrassed. It is amazing to see some people really working but they don't have any skills. They are holding down the jobs because they learn it you know, they learn it. They know that's black pepper because they know that's black pepper, but if the chefs ask them to write that [black pepper] on the order, they can't write it. [But] they are ashamed to admit it.

She also noted how she helps her colleagues so they will show up for work only when scheduled. She commented:

> They are not even aware that the schedule has changed because they cannot read but they are too ashamed to admit it. Sometimes, it gets too busy and I don't have the time or cannot get around to letting them know. I also help them to fill out their vacation forms. I decided to join [the program] because I wanted to improve [my reading]. I was never embarrassed. Embarrassment is a dangerous thing.

The reluctance of this respondent's co-workers to join a program could be due to the fact that there was a literacy support network at the work place. They saw little need to join the program as there was always someone to help them with the literacy tasks demanded of them.

A mature learner on another island concurred with this view, "Some have too much pride. Many times when you want to do something you have to deny yourself and come. Yes, I think it is pride." Another agreed when she commented, "For most of them it's their pride." One younger woman said that she could understand why some persons would be reluctant to join, "For someone who cannot read, it is a hurtful feeling to really express that

you cannot read. Some people can't say or won't say that they can't read." Agreeing with other respondents that embarrassment could be a contributing factor to learners' reluctance to participate in literacy programs, she noted:

> There are many people who do not want to admit that they cannot read or that they cannot write. The sessions need to be very private because people are ashamed. The fact that they [the sessions] might not have been private enough for some people may have contributed to their refusal to join.

On one island in particular, the sessions were very private because the Laubach one-to-one tutoring was the only method adopted. The tutors and learners arranged the time and place for sessions to be held. Data from the coordinators' questionnaires indicate that on the other islands, there were mainly small group tutoring sessions. Learners in these group tutoring programs did not express concern about privacy. However, some respondents did indicate that it could contribute to the reluctance of those who chose not to participate. Local BALM organizers may need to highlight the issue of participant confidentiality and anonymity if they want to attract the target group.

Tutors also voiced opinions of why they felt that adults were reluctant to become a part of the literacy programs. One tutor stated that people are hesitant because, "They are ashamed and afraid that others will find out that they are being tutored." Another suggested, "Some learners are very shy and do not want other people to know that they cannot read." In the words of one instructor:

> Some of them [the learners] object because they feel that other people will make fun of them because they can't read. You ask them a question and the others would probably laugh and they can't take it. So many people shy away from it [the program] because they are ashamed. They feel dumb and are embarrassed.

A tutor on another island agreed that learners are ashamed to participate. However, she also pointed out that there is sometimes a language barrier as well:

> Some of the learners are shy or ashamed and they do not want to participate. [But] there is sometimes a language barrier. Some learners do not speak English and we [the tutors] are not fluent in Creole.

In the Bahamas, there is growing concern over the increasing number of non-standard English speakers. Many of the older adults in this particular ethnic group do not speak any English. This makes communication with mainstream Bahamians very difficult. Evidence of this problem is more prevalent on some islands than others. The problem is greatest on those islands where there is a demand for unskilled workers, for example, on islands where there is large scale farming or fishing. Two of these islands are included in this study. Tutors also felt that self-pride could have been a factor in learners' reluctance to become a part of the program: "It's pride, that's what happens when you have pride. Even though it may be a large community, news will get around."

Respondents on one island also alluded to the fact that many adults are reluctant to participate in the programs because of their work schedules or the availability of the programs within their communities. Learners find it very difficult to fit the class sessions into their daily schedules. Many times the sessions conflict with their work schedules.

Many respondents referred to "working shifts" as a barrier to full participation in classes. One learner stated that after she decided to join the program she asked her supervisor for a day off from work to attend the literacy class. "Because I work on a shift system I had to insist that they give me a day off so that I could go [to classes]." However, she was quick to point out that getting a day off from work would not be possible for everyone. She explained:

> All bosses may not do this [give them a day off] for their workers because they are not compelled to do it. It's like keep this job or go to the reading program. When people have to make a choice between their work and the literacy classes naturally they will stick with the job. You have to keep your job. I think that's why many of them had to drop out [of the program].

Tourism is the leading industry in the Bahamas. The majority of workers in the country are employed in service-oriented jobs and their work schedules change periodically, sometimes with very little advance notice. Many people who could benefit from the literacy programs experience these work related schedule changes. Persons may

express interest or want to be a part of the programs but keeping their jobs takes precedence over attending classes, particularly when the majority of these persons are the sole bread-winners of the family. This concern may have prompted one learner to suggest that classes should be held to meet a range of work schedules. He admitted, "Sometimes I find it difficult to attend sessions during working hours." He suggested that the scheduling could be one reason why others are reluctant to join the programs.

Another respondent noted that others are reluctant to join because all of the program sessions were held in one central area. In some instances, many of the potential learners are scattered throughout the island. In other words, the program may not be available to everyone who may wish to attend. Learner observations suggest that local program organizers may need to adjust the class schedules and program venues to meet the needs of the various clients.

On the other hand, some respondents felt that learners were reluctant because they were too old to start classes. One of the older learners indicated that she had been approached many times, "They would come up to me and say, don't you think that you are too old to just talk about going to school?" While there were some who felt this way, it should be noted that a number of the learners who were in the programs were over the age of 50. In fact, there was one 70 year old in one of the programs.

Many of the respondents mentioned personal obligations or commitments as barriers to program participation. A prominent figure in the community on one of the islands and a learner in the adult program professed:

> It takes a lot of discipline to want to go back and learn, keep up with homework and, do everything you ought to be doing because added to that you have other commitments. As a result, [of these commitments] they [the learners] refuse to register in the adult literacy program.

The coordinators also shared their views concerning learners' reluctance to become a part of an adult literacy program when they referred to learners having to contend with family responsibilities and other personal obligations as well as increasing their literacy

abilities. Other program leaders indicated that sometimes it is difficult for some people to get to the sites.

In determining why participants were not forthcoming in joining the programs, respondents concluded that those persons did not see the need for literacy in their lives. A tutor explained:

> Well, for one thing they don't see the importance [of literacy], they want to read but they don't really want to learn to the extent that they want to put forth any effort.

Similar results were noted by Nickse, Speicher and Buchek (1988).

On one of the islands, tutors and the coordinator were convinced that people do not see the need for literacy in their lives. They believed that people find ways to survive and therefore, they see no need to change anything. Joining the program would mean exposing themselves to the world, making them vulnerable and open. One tutor noted, "In a community like this, where there are not many opportunities and [people] are getting by daily, they see no need for it [literacy]." One coordinator concurred:

> They [people] feel that they are managing well so why come out of the closet? The community is just too small and everybody is going to know. Is it worth it? Is it worth them exposing themselves for what they were going to gain? Others are too old and they feel that they don't need to do it because it is too late anyway.

There were also those persons according to one tutor who think, "I've come this far, why bother now? Why go through all of this? Many of them have experienced quite a high level of success. They get by." One instructor captured the issue of reluctance very well in the following scenario:

> They are getting by. It depends on how successful they are. I know when I was growing up we had a gentleman who I am sure couldn't read and he had the most money in the community. He had a business head. When no-one else had property in the city he probably had houses on rent. He had a bar-room in the community and I'm sure that he had the heaviest bankbook in the community. So a lot of them might feel the same way. Hey, I could get by, I have money. Why should I go to something like that? I don't believe that that man could spell his name. I don't think he

> could make an X. But he had the most money and he knew how to plan for the future.

Reluctance to join a literacy program appeared to be similar throughout the islands. People in the communities appeared to have developed a good social-network and therefore, they saw little need for literacy in their own lives (Fingeret, 1983).

It was also noted that when learners did join the programs, organizers sometimes experienced problems with retention. Retention in this particular study as stated previously refers to organizers being able to keep the learners in the programs. Learners who join these programs sometimes drop out before completing the course for various reasons.

A number of the learners felt that tutors play a major role in whether learners drop out of the program or not. One learner stated, "Tutors should encourage learners from dropping out by convincing them of the benefits to gain from such programs." Another learner felt that, "Learners dropped out of the program because of personality conflicts with their tutors." One respondent suggested, " Learners drop out of the program because they may be intimidated by the tutors."

On one of the islands a young woman suggested other reasons. She stated:

> Some learners may have become bored and do not have anything to look forward to in the sessions. Others may not be interested or the classes are not meeting their needs. Many times learners are looking for excitement. If the classes are not exciting enough they are not going to stay. They have to add a little drama to it. If the classes become boring and dull they [the learners] will stop from coming.

These sentiments were shared by many other respondents throughout the islands. Respondents also indicated that the motivation may no longer be there, or some learners may have moved to another area. It was also suggested that, "Learners were too tired at the end of the day to attend classes or they may have found someone else to tutor them." Another tutor commented, "They drop out for personal reasons. The learners are adults and they have lots of obligations and other things that they think are more important than attending classes." Other tutors were of the same opinion. "Sometimes learners have

family responsibilities and they are unable to keep their arrangements," contended one tutor.

Table 3

Number of Students and Average Length of Time in a Program

Islands	Total Number of Students	Time in Program
Grand Bahama	64	2 years +
Abaco	25	12 months +
Andros	20	2 years
Exuma	13	6 to 12 months

As noted in Table 3, on some of the islands, there were few problems with learner retention. According to coordinators' records, many of the learners had been in the programs for over two years. Furthermore, tutors and coordinators indicated that there are always long waiting lists of learners who wish to participate in the programs.

Interestingly, the organizers' greatest concern was tutor retention. One tutor commented, "The problem is that we don't have sufficient tutors." Table 4 provides information on the tutors in the program.

Table 4

Number of Tutors and Average Length of Time in a Program

Islands	Number of Tutors	Time in Program
Grand Bahama	71	6 to 12 months
Abaco	3	12 months
Andros	3	12 months
Exuma	6	6 to 12 months

One learner noted, "Several of the tutors have dropped out of the program. Now there is only one tutor to contend with all of the students." One coordinator on one island indicated:

> Tutors drop out of the program for a number of reasons. The commitment needed [for tutoring] was sometimes greater than they had anticipated. They also had family and personal responsibilities. Sometimes their priorities change or they relocated to another area.

Another coordinator discovered that:

> After a year or so the tutors just fizzle out or they stop tutoring because it is so hard to keep a learner motivated. I think they [the tutors] get tired of it. You know, you could lead the horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

Tutor attrition is understandable because the majority of tutors and coordinators have full-time jobs; they are volunteers in the literacy programs and they are also involved in other community organizations and projects. One tutor summarized the ideas of others when she noted, "The same people are involved all the time. It is very difficult to do justice to all of them."

Coordinators remained with the program longer than tutors and learners in spite of their volunteer role. Table 5 provides information pertaining to the status of the coordinators in the BALM program.

Table 5

Number of Coordinators and Length of Time in the Program

Islands	Number of Coordinators	Time in Program
Grand Bahama	1	2 years +
Abaco	1	4 years
Andros	1	2 years
Exuma	1	1 year +

Discussion

In some societies, participation in adult literacy programs may carry a high social status. In others, it might be looked down upon. Participation may suggest that there is a problem--that former education was lacking. In other instances, participation may be seen as showing off, or suggesting that some people want to rise above their friends and move away from the social network (Cropley, 1983).

The very nature of adult literacy programs leads to problems with participation. As the data reveal in this study, adults lead very complicated lives. Therefore, many factors have to be considered when adults are making decisions whether to participate or not. As Malicky and Norman (1996) suggest, organizers need to recognize the complexity of the lives of adult learners in order to make it possible for adults to continue in adult literacy programs.

Motivation is very important because it guides the participants' decisions to participate in literacy programs. When learners' sense of motivation is strong they are able to overcome many of the obstacles and barriers that militate against participation. When motivation is weak, however, adults are less likely to join the programs that are offered in the community.

Many of the reasons for participation as expressed by the adult learners in the literature are generally the same as those conveyed by the learners in this study. This finding suggests that marginally literate adults, regardless of geographical circumstances, share many common concerns and needs.

BALM organizers hope that at the end of the first four years of the program, the majority of adults enrolled in the literacy programs will be reading at improved levels. Many of the learners in the present study expressed the desire to improve their reading abilities. However, reading was not the only motivating factor for these learners. They also desired to increase their educational standards and to become more independent in addressing daily literacy tasks.

The data analysis shows that the main motivations of the participants in this study were linked with self-improvement and self-satisfaction including factors such as increasing their reading abilities, improving their educational standing and addressing daily functional needs. These results are similar to the findings of the Iowa Adult Illiteracy Studies conducted by Beder (1989a) and Beder and Valentine (1987, 1990)). As in these studies, the participants in this present study did not consider vocational interests a strong motivating factor in their decision to become a part of a literacy program. While "getting a better job" or "wanting to make more money" was alluded to as being important in other findings in the literature, this was not the case in the present study.

Boshier (1983) points out that adults are best motivated when learning is recognized as a continuous lifelong process that occurs in a variety of formal and informal settings. One may suggest that the learners viewed the program as the prime, or perhaps the only source for learning. No reference was made to the more informal learning that occurs within the community. They recognized that they had a need that motivated them to seek education. This finding supports Knowles (1970) who believes that because of immediate needs arising out of life situations, adults are motivated to attend educational programs.

On the other hand, coordinators and tutors in the present study explained that while many of the learners that were involved with the study were highly motivated, others, in their opinion, appeared to lack motivation. It is interesting to note that the selection of learner respondents depended on coordinator choice. Perhaps the learner respondents in this study were selected by the coordinators because of their strong participation record in the program.

A review of the literature indicates that when adult learners were asked what motivated them to want to learn to read, their views were varied, although somewhat similar in nature. Dubbeldam (1994) considers the strongest motivation for people to learn to read is their wish to strengthen their social position. He confirms that many new literates have stated that, after acquiring the skills of reading, they were accepted by the society.

Being literate may also strengthen a person's self-esteem. The respondents in this study did not indicate any problems with acceptance. Rather, they viewed themselves and were viewed by others as being well respected and active members in their communities.

Usually, the motivation to read is centered around the individual's personal goals. Ooijens (cited in Dubbeldam, 1994), lists specific motives why adults want to learn to read. For example, learners wish to read books and newspapers or to help their children with their homework. Within this study and others found in the literature (e.g., Heathington, Salter and Roser, 1984; Richardson and Thislethewaite, 1991), learners' motivation to read was sometimes personal in nature. Some respondents simply wanted to read like everyone else--for reading is a literate thing to do.

In many instances, marginally literate adults present reasons for program participation that frequently match the goals of the program or its organizers. BALM's documents indicate with respect to reading, that there was a desire to increase the level of literacy within the less literate community in the Bahamas. The learners in the present study reflected similar views.

Learners, regardless of age, expressed the desire to pursue further education. Many of them saw the literacy program as a stepping stone to fulfill a dream. For the more mature learners, lack of opportunities rather than failing school prevented them from furthering their education. According to the literature, (Beder and Valentine, 1987; 1990; Bova, 1985; Fingeret, 1985; Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox, 1975), further education was one of the most important benefits of adult literacy programs. Some of the participants in this present study attribute success in their continued education to being a part of a literacy program.

Many of the learners expressed the need for functional literacy in order to cope with everyday living. Generally, respondents centered their comments around activities such as completing various health, social or financial forms. These learners are all very independent people who want to be able to handle their own transactions. Therefore, they sensed an

urgency to be able to fill in forms correctly and complete other functional literacy tasks. This independence gives them a sense of empowerment. According to Fingeret and Drennon (1997), "The quest for independent literacy practices is a quest to fit in, to do the things the way the dominant culture does them" (p. 73).

Lundberg (1991) suggests that those in the field of adult literacy shift perspective from the conventional view of reading as a personal skill to reading as a cultural practice. He contends that literacy outside school emphasizes the social dimension. This view is also supported by Wagner (1991). Learners want to become competent at various forms of functional literacy. The learners in this study placed a strong emphasis on this aspect of literacy development.

Barton, Hamilton and Padmore (1991) and Street (1984) conducted extensive ethnographic studies in the area of functional literacy. These researchers have provided information that focuses on the local needs and settings within a society. The results from these studies were mirrored by the learners in this present study with respect to their desire to carry out independent daily literacy tasks.

When learners were asked why they felt that other adults were reluctant to join or dropped out of literacy programs, they suggested a variety of reasons as (e.g., embarrassment, work schedule, personal obligations, or little need for literacy). These findings support those reported in the literature (Houle, 1983; Johnson and Rivera, 1965). More recently, some researchers have suggested embarrassment or shame as the greatest barrier to participation in adult literacy programs (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997; Van Telberg and Dubios, 1989).

While embarrassment was not considered a major factor by some researchers, respondents in this present study concur with the finding of the latter researchers in that shame is a barrier to adult participation in literacy programs on the islands (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997). They further suggest that many of these adults may have had bad experiences in school and that they learned as children that their literacy problems were

their fault. Briscoe and Ross (1989) and Quigley (1992) also share the views of these researchers concerning early school experiences and the effects that these experiences may have on learners' reluctance to participate in adult literacy programs. However, early school experiences were not referred to in this present study. Learners focused instead on the lack of school opportunities. It should also be noted that learner retention, a problem in many of the adult literacy programs, was not a major issue in this present study. Instead, there seems to be more concern about tutor retention, an aspect only addressed in a limited way in the literature.

BALM's organizers may have considered that, given the lack of privacy on small islands, adult learners might be embarrassed to participate. Therefore, they recommended training coordinators and tutors in the one-on-one tutoring method as indicated in the BALM prospectus. One may also suggest that the BALM campaign was initiated as a result of political shame. When the government recognized that there was a decrease in the literacy rate in the country, it took on the responsibility for correcting this reduction of literacy achievement in the general population.

The data suggest that to be successful the BALM program must serve its clients. In other words, organizers should be concerned with meeting the needs and developing programs that will serve the most people. To do this they may need to take into account learners' suggestions concerning their various needs. These findings indicate the BALM organizers may wish to take these other factors into consideration when planning to recruit future participants.

Learners on one island suggested that the organizers consider arranging tutoring sessions after working hours because many learners found it very difficult to fit the sessions into their work schedules. The majority of the sessions were held during the day time when many persons desiring tutoring would be at work. Another issue was access to the sites where the programs were offered. Many of those needing the services did not have access to a car. Changing the venues where tutoring sessions are held in close

proximity to the learners' homes may help to alleviate this problem. While coordinators indicated that every effort was made to make the services more convenient for the learners, it appears that this was not always the case.

The data also reveal that learners felt that many people might be too ashamed to participate in the program and these persons feared that others may find out about their literacy problem. Organizers on those islands where there were only group tutoring sessions might consider using individualized tutoring as well to meet the needs of all their prospective clients. However, given the length of time that BALM has been in place, participation levels generally appear quite satisfactory. The concerns expressed by the learners in particular may provide some directions that BALM organizers could take to increase participation levels in the future.

Program Influence

The data analysis illuminated two areas with respect to program influence in which respondents felt that they benefitted. The two areas identified are educational influence, and personal and social influences. These areas will be addressed in this section.

Educational Influence

All of the learners acknowledged that the program benefitted them educationally and that they learned a lot from it. Learners identified improvement in their reading and writing as having the greatest influence on them. One young man explained how the program has benefited him:

> I know that I'm a better reader. I don't have as many problems with words as I used to. When I'm reading something now, I find that I can read it much better. I'm also able to sit and write things out better without having to look it up in the dictionary. I am able to spell and I know how to break words down into syllables. When I go away, I am now able to read the signs and sometimes I look at words and try to pronounce them. I am even able to read things like at the end of a TV program. Before, I used to miss a lot of stuff and now I find out that when I try to read it I can pick up most of what is going on like who the co-actors and stars are. What I'm picking up now I used to avoid before.

Expanding upon those views that focused on learning, an older respondent reflected:

> I have learned a lot. I had problems with quotation marks. I knew when to put a full stop and comma but those little quotation marks, I just did not understand what they meant. In the sessions I learned when to use them and when not to use them. I also learned a lot in spelling and other things. I learned to read much better. Knowing what those full stops and commas meant helped me to read better and to write better sentences. Even though I don't have it down pat, I have improved a lot.

It is noteworthy that respondents emphasized improvement in mechanics as an indicator of educational improvement indicating a more technical approach to learning in contrast to a more critical, participatory learning approach. It is possible that these views mirror the instructional approaches learners were exposed to.

On one island where many of the learners were over forty, one learner shared how the program had an influence on him:

> The program has helped me tremendously. My reading, writing and spelling have improved tremendously as well. I'm a far better, far better reader and writer now. They have taught me so much about writing and how to write. I improve more every time I come to class.

One learner who claimed that spelling was one of her weak areas recognized that she improved in that area and she attributed her success to being a part of the literacy program:

> I need to know how to spell because I don't have anybody beside me to ask how to spell the words, you know. But through going there [the program] has made it better for me because it has caused me to pay attention to words more. When I watch TV I can now pronounce the announcer's name by just breaking down the sounds of the words. I like it just knowing how far I have come in improving my spelling.

A young man who hoped one day to own his own business was experiencing some problems with reading. He explained how participating in the literacy program helped him:

> I had a problem where I would be stumbling over words, I still do sometimes but it [the program] has assisted me in overcoming that problem. I just need to continue [practicing]. I can now read quietly to myself.

Another learner expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be able to attend the literacy classes to improve her reading. She also believes that the program has helped her:

> I learned a lot of things that I did not understand, like some of the words that I did not know the meanings of. I learned most of the meanings and I know the difference now.

Other learners made comments such as:

> I am a better reader and writer because I can see it. I know the mistakes that I used to make. I can see the improvement in my writing.
>
> Well, I'm reading more than I used to.
>
> Before [I joined the program] it would be days and I wouldn't check to read. But now, whatever passes my eyes I just read what it says.
>
> I find that anytime I need to find out anything I'll research a couple of books in order to find it.

Some learners attributed the program with providing a novel dimension to their educational growth. A mature woman said:

> Everything was fresh, it was extra good because words that I couldn't pronounce before, it helped me to be able to pronounce my words better. . . I learned a lot of things that I did not understand. Words that I did not know the meanings of I learned the meanings. Like when there are two words that spell alike but they have different meanings. I now know the difference.

Another woman indicated that she could read much better now, and she felt that she was now practicing her reading more. One learner pointed out that in daily reading one may come across words that one cannot pronounce. She explained that the program helped her because she is now able to break words down in order to pronounce them.

Tutors also experienced educational growth and were influenced by the educational activities. One of the tutors explained how the experiences had an influence on her:

> When I started the tutoring program I'd never been involved in any kind of tutoring or anything like that before. After the first six months it made me realize that I wanted to learn a bit more myself and I really enjoyed doing the tutoring. I felt I was getting something out of it, you know.

A tutor who said that she taught the non-readers in the program explained how the tutoring sessions affected her, "Once you get there [to the site] it just lifts your spirits, you get that extra strength. When they progress, you feel a sense of achievement too."

Personal and Social Influences

Learners were asked whether there were any other notable changes in their lives that could be directly attributed to their participation in the program. Overwhelmingly, they indicated that they now had greater self-confidence. One young woman simply said, "I feel more confident." A young man explained:

> You know, it gives me a bit of confidence to overcome a fear. I had a problem. I would stumble over words when I tried to read something in front of a crowd. It has assisted me in getting over that fear. I guess I just have to continue. I couldn't do a lot of things that I could do now.

One woman expanded on this perspective when she said:

> Oh! I have a lot more confidence, much more confidence, more sure of myself. You know, I speak out much more and I thank God. When I use words now I may make a little mistake but it wouldn't be that many. Before when I got in interviews most of the times I never said anything because I felt that I would say the wrong thing but it's not because I didn't know. I didn't have the confidence in myself. You know it makes me feel good.

Another commented that she was more out-spoken, and not shy and scared anymore. This view was supported by another learner who alluded to being more out-spoken.

Coordinators and tutors also commented upon learners benefitting personally from the program. One coordinator said, "People [learners] now have more confidence in themselves, they are able to get up there [in front of an audience] without any fear and read." On the same issue, one tutor stated:

> The program has offered learners confidence which is a big thing. Before they would not have ventured to try and call a word or do whatever. They know that they have been through the program, they were exposed, they know that they have gotten some things right so they will try. Another thing that it has offered them is an understanding of some things that they already knew but didn't know why. . . It is

> like an understanding of some of the things that they wondered about. This really helped to give them self-confidence.

Another tutor shared:

> Talking about being confident, my student came to me last year after Fathers' Day. He said to me, " Boy, Ms.---- you know what I did Sunday? They asked me to conduct something in church and I did it. I only did it because after I thought about all we have done, I took the chance to go up there and conduct part of the service." He said that afterwards everybody congratulated him telling him what a good job he did. He said that he knew that if he did not come to this program, he wouldn't have gone up there and done that.

She further commented, "If he didn't do it, he wouldn't have known that he had the confidence. Little simple things that we take for granted are big issues for them."

In addition to growth in self-confidence, learners also commented upon their growth in self-esteem. One of the mature learners talked about the meetings that were arranged for learners and how attending those improved her self-esteem:

> Since I've started, they have had I'll call them little student 'get togethers,' where students had the chance to meet each other and they also had the privilege of sharing what they had learned with others. . . There was this man who could not read at all when he first started [the program]. When he got up and explained the things that he had learned and what he can do now I sat back [because hearing his story] made me feel comfortable. There were also three or four ladies and they were much older than me. They explained all the things that they can now do for themselves as a result of the program. Some of those things I couldn't do. It really boosts your self-esteem.

Another learner also referred to the student meetings that were held:

> When we got together with them [tutors and coordinators] last year we did a book report. During that session a young man got up and he read. But like he said, if it wasn't for the program no way he would have been up there reading. He said that the program has boosted his self-esteem.

A learner with a young family who also worked in a kindergarten saw the program setting as providing time for herself. In other words, the program provided her with personal space. Referring to the classes, she remarked:

> What I like most about the classes is the time I have for myself. When I'm at home it's the kids, when I'm at school it's the kids. So here in a classroom setting I have time for myself. It's a chance for me to do something for myself.

In addition to the personal influence of the programs, respondents also commented that the program influenced then socially. That is, they felt more independent in carrying out their literacy responsibilities, and more able to cope as active members of their communities.

Some learners felt that they were able to speak and communicate better. One learner admitted, "The greatest change that I have noticed in myself is how much better I can communicate with others."

Learners also indicated that they were better able to socialize in the community as a result of program participation. A young man said, "When I go out in the community now, I know how to speak to people. I'm a bit more polite." Another shared the same sentiment. Learners intimated that they were able to share what they have learned with others in the community and exchange ideas with others. A young learner suggested:

> I could share my knowledge with others in the community perhaps in the afternoons when all the guys are together. You know, talk about and explain some of the things that I have experienced. It might just give them some inspiration.

Learners also mentioned helping and supporting each other. They agreed that working in a group really helped:

> We have a group, we get together and compare work. We don't have to hide our work. We help each other. If there is something I don't know I bring it to the them [the other members of the group] and I'll say that I can't work it out and they will help me. That's what it is all about. That's what learning is all about.

A mature woman who felt that the literacy program influenced her explained:

> Participating in the literacy program keeps my mind occupied. Going to classes help to keep me young. It boosts my spirit. I like it [the program] it makes me feel good and I share what I learn with other people.

For another learner, the program has given her a sense of freedom, "I feel free now that I can read and write better. I can pick up any book and read it for myself."

A young woman who is affiliated with another organization within the community thought that it would be an excellent idea to be a part of the planning and running of the program because she has contact with many of the young people in the community. She assured me:

> I have no problems with that [being involved in the planning] Ms. ..... is doing it [conducting the classes], she is very busy. She is a school teacher, and she has work to do and they are always off in the summer. They have their breaks here and there, so if she were to set up one or two persons in the community to more or less get it going while she is not here. She could provide the information for us, and give us a guideline as to how to conduct the classes. I have no problem assisting them with whatever needs to be done.

There were other learners who felt that being involved in the program was one way to give something back to the program. One learner said:

> Well, I don't mind at all because whatever I've learned I don't mind sharing it with someone else. Someone took the time to help me so I don't mind taking the time to help someone else in any which way that I can.

Another learner who mentioned that there were many others needing help in the community and who indicated earlier that she tries to help her colleagues at her work place suggested:

> I'll do it for I'll be giving something back to them because they have been giving to me. I'll be helping someone else. I can give them my ideas, I can communicate with the people who work with me because they really need the help.

Two older women confirmed, "I'll be glad to help, I'll be a part of it if they ask me if there is anything that I could do to help I'll be happy to do it." The other commented, "I don't mind being a part of it because I don't back down from anything now."

Respondents agreed that the program gave them a feeling of independence, a sense of empowerment. They were now able to engage in some literacy practices in their communities that were out of their reach prior to their involvement in the programs. Achieving these goals were important to these learners because they all seem to be very

active and involved in their communities. Learners also referred to being able to complete various forms correctly and signing their own cheques as major accomplishments. One learner explained:

> There are persons who could not spell or sign their names or anything like that. They are now able to do so. Persons who had to depend on others for filling out forms at the bank, filling out forms for travel, they are now able to do so. It is amazing, now people who travel to the U.S. and elsewhere, they don't have to be dependent [on others]. They don't have to be embarrassed when they are coming back to our country or going to another country because they can fill out the forms correctly.

Others noted that they liked the social discussions that the program offered them, "I really enjoy the classes, especially the fellowship, it is like coming together as one family. It is like a social gathering." A tutor expanded on this view when she said, "It built a bond between the students and me. I'm able to socialize with them at a different level. I now know them on a one-on- one basis. Before, I did not know them at all." Another tutor shared:

> I got personal satisfaction from doing it [tutoring]. Knowing that I was helping and seeing the progress that they made. It was not just having to go there for two hours, you know. I would be tired but I really looked forward to going every Thursday. It was the interaction and sharing of knowledge that I looked forward to.

On another island the tutors shared similar feelings. One tutor stated, "I really sort of bonded with my student. She looks at me as a friend. We have developed a friendship." Another spoke of the social relationships she experienced with all of her students. She commented:

> I have become very attached to my students you know, I've become so involved. We have become very close. I had to go through a death with one of my female students and that experience just brought us closer together. . . We really became friends. You really become attached to your students.

Another explained, "I think that we have pretty much bonded with the students. For the most part they have been quite appreciative of what we are doing."

Discussion

In relation to program influence, respondents indicated that they received educational, personal and social benefits from their participation in the program. The data suggest that it is not enough for literacy providers to concentrate only on the educational aspect of literacy development as many are inclined to do. Rather, attention should also focus on learners' everyday needs outside of the program as well. Learners need help in dealing with everyday obstacles (e.g., writing and signing cheques, filling in application forms, and communicating more easily) in their quest to become independent citizens. They want to be able to perform the kinds of literacy practices that are common in their society. It is interesting to note that learners did refer to the fact that tutors took the time to listen to their 'life circumstances.' Similar influences as the result of program participation are reported in studies conducted by Campbell (1995) and Malicky and Norman (1996).

Educationally, learners expressed overwhelmingly that they felt their reading and writing improved as a result of the literacy programs. They indicated that they were now able to use their increased reading and writing skills to do those things that they were unable to do previously (e.g., reading the Bible and other books, filling in various forms). These results are similar to those found in other studies (Beder and Valentine, 1987; Boggs, Buss and Yarnell, 1979; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1984).

Learners indicated that they wanted to improve their reading and, as mentioned earlier, this was one of the main reasons for them joining the program. Learners being tutored using the Laubach approach receive certificates of achievement once they complete the program. However, focusing primarily on the technical aspects of reading and writing would suggest that participants view literacy as a set of skills to be learned rather than literacy as a developmental process. Fingeret and Drennon (1997) suggest that an emphasis on discrete technical skills such as phonic analysis, syllabication, and main idea identification supports an autonomous approach to literacy.

It should be noted that while participants frequently mentioned the mechanics of reading and writing, the data also reveal that they felt a sense of independence which allowed them to successfully engage in the social literacy practices of their various island communities. Fingeret and Drennon (1997) regard literacy practices as not merely being able to perform the tasks but, "doing them as other people do them in the same situation" (p. 63).

Improving learners' reading levels was one of BALM's major objectives. This objective states that, "By the end of the fourth year of the project the majority of adults enrolled in literacy programs will be reading at improved levels" (Ministry of Education 'Let's Read Bahamas', Statement of Purpose, 1995, p. 1). In the opinions of the learners at least, this objective was realized.

The influence of adult literacy programs comes from the changes it produces in the learners. Although these effects are usually instrumental or external (such as improved reading and writing skills), the influence can also be internal pertaining to such things as changes in feelings or attitudes (Beder, 1991). A notable change identified by respondents that they also attributed to being a part of the program was the self-confidence that they gained. Learners cited improvement in their self-esteem as another change that they noticed. These views were also shared by the tutors and coordinators, and similar results have been reported in other studies (Bogg, Buss and Yarnell, 1979; Jones and Petry, 1980; Walker, Ewert and Whaples, 1981).

Learners' increased self-confidence and self-esteem, attributes that they suggested had been lacking before their participation in the literacy programs, affected many aspects of their lives. The data further reveal that learners were confident enough to consider becoming involved in the program at another level. Some learners were convinced that they could assist with the planning and running of the literacy program. This finding suggests that the learners in this particular study were leaning towards a more participatory approach to adult literacy. Within a participatory approach to literacy development in adult

literacy programs, learners take responsibility for their own learning. Active participation enhances learners' personal development and enables them to transform their learning to the larger social contexts in which they live. Many programs have adopted this approach, allowing more learner involvement at all levels. Increased self-confidence and self-esteem provide learners with a sense of empowerment as well as enhanced performance in their daily literacy practices. This outcome is in keeping with the BALM's objective that maintains that all adult citizens should participate in the development of the country.

Neilson (1984, p. 8), stipulated that, "Literacy cannot be separated from culture and from the signs that make meaning in that culture." She sees literacy as a means of enabling adults to feel at home in their world, to behave appropriately in both the personal and social contexts of their lives. Fingeret and Drennon (1997) agree. The learners in this study felt that their social standing had improved as a result of their participation in the literacy programs. Examples such as being a part of a group, being able to express oneself better, and developing personal relationships are some of the factors that make one part of a culture, a part of the society. The fact that the learners in this study were personally interacting with their literate instructors helped to confirm their desire to belong. Similar results were found in other studies (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997; Jones and Petry, 1980;).

The results of this study suggest that BALM organizers may wish to attend to the personal and social aspects that are important in program participation in addition to educational factors when planning adult literacy programs. While the BALM organizers made recommendations for setting up the programs, by and large it was left up to the local program developers to determine what should actually be included in the individual programs, depending on the various needs of the participants. As Fingeret and Drennon (1997) contend, literacy programs can become extra burdens rather than a source of additional support for learners when social contexts are ignored. In this present study, the data suggest that the providers at the local level attempted to address learners' educational, personal and social needs within their programs.

It is also interesting to note that learners indicated their willingness to become more actively involved in the delivery of the literacy program. They see such participation as a way of giving something back to the community. They feel that they have a contribution to make and as learners themselves, they can identify with and share the concerns of other learners. Learners' improved reading and writing skills, their growth in self-confidence and self-esteem have resulted in increased independence, suggesting that they are less reliant on their families and friends for their daily existence. These learners can now pay attention to the issues of their local communities and the nation as a whole for they are more confident in voicing their opinions. They become empowered to join the literate community and are able to share in its successes, responsibilities and development--reasons for the initial launching of the BALM program.

Instructional Initiatives

A third theme that surfaced from the data was that of instructional initiatives. Two sub-themes reflected respondents' perspectives--characteristics of instructional approaches and curricular materials, and training and professional development

Characteristics of Instructional Approaches and Curricular Materials

Because there was little uniformity in instructional approaches and materials for adult literacy teaching across the islands, I provide an overview of each methodological approach used on each island. Subsequently, I provide participants' views on each of these approaches. This section concludes with an analysis of respondents' perspectives on training and professional development.

Description of Island Programs

On one island, the mode of instruction was The Laubach Way To Reading (1981). The Laubach Way to Reading is a basic reading and writing series developed over sixty years ago in the Philippines by Frank Laubach who was a missionary there at that time. He was recognized as a pioneer in the area of adult literacy. Laubach also founded Laubach Literacy International, an organization which conducts literacy programs in the United

States, Canada, Latin America, the Near East and India. Laubach workers mobilize and train volunteer tutors, and organize community-based literacy programs (Laubach, Kirk and Laubach, 1981). Laubach Literacy International, through its New Readers Press Division, publishes a variety of teaching and reading materials for adults of limited reading abilities.

The Laubach Way to Reading series was designed primarily as an instructional method for teaching adults to read and write in their own language. Materials consist of five skill books and their corresponding readers. The teacher's manual for each skill book includes very detailed teaching instructions together with specific lesson plans. The Laubach method is intended to provide for systematic development of basic reading and writing skills. Each lesson includes a component on vocabulary development and phonics or structural analysis of words. In addition, lessons include the reading of a short story, comprehension checks, and writing practice. Tutoring sessions are hierarchically ordered. For example, learners are initially exposed to the regular spellings of basic words and subsequently move on to irregular spellings and more difficult reading and writing and grammar skills. The corresponding reader for each skill book includes a collection of stories or articles using much of the same vocabulary as the skill book. These readers are an intrinsic part of the Laubach approach as they are intended to provide opportunity for the learner to gain confidence and independent reading habits. The reading series is designed for use in tutorial or group situations.

The learners on the island where the Laubach approach is utilized are first interviewed and tested to determine their reading abilities. The results of this test determine at which point in the program each learner will begin. Upon completion of this initial test, learners are then matched with a tutor. Those persons testing higher than the fourth grade level cannot be accommodated because in the present program only the basic series is available. However, The Laubach program has a more advanced series 'The Challenger'

that is intended for use with learners who are reading above the fourth grade level. This particular series take learners up to junior high level reading standards.

The coordinators and all tutors on the island were required to take part in training sessions on this approach before commencing their individual one-on-one tutoring sessions. BALM's officials have tried to ensure that all the coordinators on the Family Islands are trained in the Laubach Approach. However, it is not a requirement that every program use this approach.

Tutoring sessions were held once a week for one and one half hours at prearranged times that were convenient for both tutor and learner. Sessions were held Mondays through Fridays during the day and in the afternoon in locations where learners' privacy was protected. Another element of the Laubach Approach was that it provided seminars and writing workshops for the learners. These sessions allowed learners to meet each other and to share their successes as well as improve their creative writing skills.

On another island, an adaptation of the method used by The Literacy Volunteers of America (1997) was the selected approach. Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) is a non-profit national organization founded in 1962 in Syracuse, New York to combat the problems of adult illiteracy in the United States. The primary premise of this approach is that well trained and supported volunteers can be effective tutors of adults, and that mobilizing the talents of large numbers of diverse kinds of people can make a significant impact on the problem of adult illiteracy.

The LVA approach is learner-centered and generally adheres to the principles of the whole language philosophy in its individualized tutoring of reading and writing, both in one-on-one and small group instruction sessions. The whole language approach recognizes that learners use their own life experiences and knowledge of what makes sense when learning to read and write. It focuses on materials that are tied to the learners' goals and interests and it stresses the use of literature and "real life" materials such as newspapers, or job application forms. Another source of reading material is Language Experience--

learners dictate or write a paragraph based on their experiences, using their own vocabulary and sentence structure.

Within the LVA approach, tutors are trained to assess the learners' reading and writing levels, interests and goals. Tutors also need to be familiar with lesson planning techniques as well as with materials that interest adults. LVA's flexible approaches to tutoring are intended to help individual learners in a manner appropriate to their learning styles, goals and literacy proficiencies. The program's ultimate aim is to help learners become independent readers and writers and active participants in the program (Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., 1997).

On the island where this approach was adapted, the coordinator and one of the tutors had the necessary LVA training. While the coordinator also had the Laubach training, he implied that he preferred a more holistic approach like the LVA. Learners on the island that used the LVA approach were taught in groups although in some cases individualized tutoring was done. The group tutoring gives the learners the opportunity to expand their language and to embrace the knowledge of the others in the group. This approach allows for purposeful interaction with other learners and is conducive to building one's self-esteem.

The tutor is seen as a facilitator (Brookfield, 1986) rather than an authority figure. The learners are responsible for their own learning and are also involved in the assessment of their progress towards the goals that they set for themselves. The main focus with this approach is to assist learners to become independent learners.

Learners in this program were allowed to bring their own materials depending on their interests and needs. The data indicated that the tutors used Bibles, hymn books, newspapers and played games sometimes to teach reading. The coordinator indicated that he held monthly training sessions when he trained the other tutors to use this approach. Tutoring sessions for the learner were held once a week for one and one half hours. The

coordinator noted that an effort was made not to extend the time because learners were involved in other community activities.

A third island used an approach that mirrored the Adult Basic Education that is similar to normal schooling. Learners were tested at the beginning to determine their reading levels and were then placed in groups according to their abilities. There were three groups of learners, beginners, intermediate and advanced. The learners in the beginners' group were those who were unable to read or write, the immediate group included learners who were able to read at the fourth grade level, and the learners in the advanced group were those who could read and write and were interested in pursuing a course of study that would prepare them to write the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) examinations.

Learners in the beginners and immediate groups were taught the basic language arts skills, while the advanced group was taught the five core curriculum subjects (i.e., English, Math, Social Studies, Religious Education and Health Science). Learners were assigned work sheets in class and homework assignments at the end of every session for further practice. The materials used for tutoring purposes were those used by the tutors in the regular classrooms. Tutors decided which materials to use and made the necessary adaptations and adjustments based on the needs of the particular group. Materials for the advanced group were chosen from among the recommended list in the BJC syllabus for the various subjects. Tutoring sessions were held twice a week, and each session lasted for one and one half hours.

This approach differs from the Laubach and LVA approaches in that there is no required mandatory training for tutors, and there are no structured or systematic series of lessons to follow. Tutors rely on their teacher training to assist them in selecting the materials that they deemed appropriate for their learners. It should be noted that the tutors on this island were trained elementary and secondary teachers but they had no training in the teaching of adults.

Organizers on the fourth island used a more functional approach. The learners were asked what they wanted to learn and the organizers planned the program around their immediate needs. This approach was developed on the premise according to Hunter (1990) that learners should possess the skills necessary to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as members of a family or community, citizens, consumers, job-holders, and members of social, religious, or other associations of their choosing. These skills include the ability to read and write adequately enough to satisfy the requirements learners set for themselves as being important for their own lives, the ability to deal positively with demands made on them by society, and the ability to solve problems they face in their daily lives.

A functional literacy approach also includes such practices as completing forms, the reading of labels on goods in supermarkets, instructions, safety signs or work notices. Such practices were the main focus of this program. There was large group instruction (including all of the learners in the program) as well as small group and individual sessions depending on the needs of the learners. Learners were given practice skills sheets and homework assignments. They were also allowed to choose books to read for pleasure. Materials used for instruction were selected and developed by the coordinator. The majority of these materials was adapted from those that the coordinator used for teaching functional and survival skills in the regular high school classroom.

This approach differed from the others previously mentioned in that learners had a participatory role in the planning of the program. Learners were allowed to voice their concerns and discuss their various needs so that the organizers could build the program around those needs and interests.

Tutors did not receive any kind of training before they began tutoring except for the coordinator who attended the Laubach training provided by BALM. However, they met once or twice a week to review the lessons taught previously and prepare lessons for future sessions. Tutoring sessions for learners were held once a week for three hours. It should

be noted that this approach was chosen by the coordinator, after futile attempts to attract marginally literate participants. The group of learners who joined the program were all readers. The learners set the pace as to what should be taught. Collectively, they suggested to the organizers what they were interested in learning and the coordinator planned the program accordingly.

Participants' Views

1. Laubach Approach: Learners in the program that used the Laubach Approach thought that it was an excellent method. When I asked one learner what she liked best about her learning sessions, she replied, "Everybody has his or her own tutor, I like that. She can spend more time with me and I like that." One learner felt that the one-on-one was a very good approach, because it involved just the learner and the tutor and no one else would know about it. For some people confidentiality was very important. This same learner remarked:

> I think that the one-to-one tutoring is real nice. Maybe they should keep it that way because those big groups turn me off and may turn other people off. The one-on-one I think is more confidential. Not only that it gives you more. . . you begin to open up more.

Another learner summarized her views of this approach when she commented, "The one-on-one is a very good program. I enjoy it, I love it, especially the story books and the general knowledge that you gain."

Learners talked about the seminars or workshops that were held for learners as part of the Laubach method:

> They were very good. They were very inspirational and motivating. They made you feel that you had to finish the program once you hear about all the other successful persons world-wide. The Laubach program that the tutors were using has been used all over America and I think the Philippines. . . I think that the main thing about the program is that the stories that they use are very interesting but not long. They had a lot of details about persons and you also learn about other countries and other places. The way they live and what make them tick.

One learner felt that her needs were being met and she also commented on the 'students' get together'. She explained that it was a chance for learners to meet each other and they also had the privilege of sharing what they had learned with the others. She commented:

> I just sat there [in the meeting] because I was only in the program about two or three weeks. There was this man who could not read at all before he started that program. When he got up and explained the things that he had learned and what he can do now I sat back because that made me feel comfortable in the midst of those people. There were also three or four ladies there and they were much older than me. They got up and explained what they can now do as a result of attending these classes. I think it is good and anyone who is in need of help, if you feel that you cannot read and would like to learn should join.

Other learners also referred to the workshops. They all seem to agree that the workshops were very helpful. They saw the workshops as opportunities for learners to share what they had learned with others. These Writing Workshops were conducted as part of the program where learners were encouraged to write their own stories. These stories were subsequently edited and read to peers. The stories were then complied to produce a book. Participants signed the book as authors.

Tutors in their interviews also mentioned the workshops. They noticed that the learners did not mind coming together for the those meetings. Tutors felt that the workshops were very successful. One tutor suggested:

> I think that if we could have more sessions like those where they could come together and get involved--a group activity where they are not actually being taught you know, they are just sharing what they have learned like the writer's workshop. I thought that it was really good if we could have a few more of those it will keep them going.

It was surprising to me that these learners who stressed how important confidentiality was to them so willing attended workshops where they would meet all the other learners and tutors in the program. It leaves one to wonder: Would they mind being tutored in small groups if it were necessary? In the words of one learner:

> You need to have more of those workshops. I think that will be one way of getting others involved. When you have a workshop, it doesn't feel like you are actually illiterate. It's just like you are going to a workshop.

Tutors using the Laubach approach also shared their views. One tutor said, "I think that this program is fantastic. In fact, this is the first program that I have seen on literacy like this." She further expressed, "I'm pleased that we have this program available to students and I don't think that it is very difficult [for the learner or the tutor]." Another tutor concurred:

> I think that it [Laubach Approach] is an excellent program. [But] I think the program might need adjustments for those who are learning disabled. Other than that I think that it is an excellent reading program compared to the LVA [Literacy Volunteers of America] reading program that I have seen. This one is much more structured which I think is good for a stronger foundation.

Reflecting upon the positive features of Laubach, a tutor commented:

> I like to a degree the systematic approach. At least the tutors know that okay this is where they are at, so this is what they have to prepare and they don't have to scurry around looking for all the different types of information. They have everything right there. And the students know that when they are finished with one lesson they can go on to the next lesson. It gives the students a sense of accomplishment. It is something positive for them. So I like that aspect of it.

Another tutor who had never done any kind of tutoring before agreed that this approach was easy to use. She said the tutor's manual was an excellent resource book and she found that she used it verbatim, otherwise she would not know what to do. Another noted that, "The manual is fantastic."

The coordinator who was a trainer for the Laubach Approach also felt that the approach was an excellent choice. She identified the approach as one of the strengths of the overall program. She also justified this view by stating:

> The Laubach Way To Reading is a tried and proven method and is also user-friendly. Adults experience immediate success in the program because of the built in strategies to meet short and long term goals. [Also] adults are tutored by trained tutors. Adults who may have been reluctant to come

> forward for assistance, do so, relieved that their privacy will not be violated.

The majority of the tutors interviewed were practicing teachers or they had taken education courses at some stage, suggesting that they had likely been exposed to the various approaches to teach reading. However, there was no evidence of this in the data. Those who instructed with this method appeared to be convinced of its merits and made limited references to deviations from its instructional suggestions. However, a few tutors acknowledged some of its shortcomings. One tutor commented that there was a need for more advanced levels in the program. She explained:

> I think that we need another step in the program because a lot of the learners come in reading at the fourth grade level. So I think we were able to work pretty much successfully through the program. But I think that there were certain needs that were not met and I don't know where to refer them to have their further needs met. . . They could have moved on to another level but then we don't have anything else for them. I wish we had something else to offer them.

One of the tutors who was also responsible for the initial testing and placing of students explained:

> The initial reading series takes you up to the fourth grade level. I guess once the foundation has been set a person can really go past that. There were some students tested above the fourth grade level. So I had to put them on hold. We still don't have anything for them. So, we needed that part of the series since the inception because it takes them up to the ninth grade level.

One tutor directed her attention to the fact that the approach was phonics based and she felt that for those persons who could not learn phonetically, there should be an alternative approach. Using the method was also difficult for those tutors who were not teachers:

> It is difficult for those who are not teachers to know how to adjust the program, because I know that one of my students had problems with phonics, that was a big problem. I didn't know what phonics was. I don't know how I learned to read. I don't know how my son learned how to read. [But] I don't remember anything about phonics.

Another tutor suggested that other approaches should be considered for those learners who are not performing in a particular approach.

> For the students who are not learning through the phonetic approach which is the method that the Laubach teaches [there should be an alternative]. If you have a tutor who is a teacher you would be able to make it. For the tutors who are not teachers it's not that simple.

A male tutor who was also a teacher confirmed what his colleague said, "I think that some of us had to take a crash course in phonics ourselves. I believe that a tape would have helped us a little bit more."

The tutors also pointed out that phonics was very difficult for many of their learners. They were all in agreement that they needed supplementary materials, something other than the ones they were using. One of them said, "We need something else that tutors can use if they needed assistance." Another tutor pointed out the necessity for supplementary materials:

> You need some supplementary stuff so that you could get away from that [Laubach] sometimes. You know, whenever you see that there are specific needs that are not strongly addressed in those books, you can go somewhere else.

Another shortcoming of the approach according to the tutors was the fact that the manual was so structured and systematic. While many tutors felt that it was very good as mentioned earlier, other tutors felt that the manual became too repetitive and boring.

Coordinators on the other islands who were exposed to but not using the Laubach approach also voiced their concerns and its effects on the BALM project. One coordinator who had attended the Laubach training sessions commented:

> I think that they [the training sessions] were good but restrictive. It was specific to that program. . . But in terms of applying the program to anything outside of that specific method you did not get that kind of training. . . They were training us to use that program and that program only. . . I have never done adult education you know, but I personally would not use it with my students. I don't know if it's done that way because it is an adult program. But it is not a program that I would really use. I would probably use it as an alternative but not the program. I think their approach--you need repetition but I think that it is too repetitive in

> places. The way they presented it I don't see myself doing it and holding the interest of the students. It is too time consuming and I think that it will be boring.

This coordinator further explained that the problem for her was lack of ideas about how to actually go about planning the program. She explained that Adult Literacy is a new area for her and that she was not familiar with the methods and strategies that are used for teaching adult learners. She needed the 'know-how' and that kind of help was not forthcoming. She indicated that while she had gone through the training, it (Laubach) was very restrictive and specific. The Laubach approach was not appropriate for the group of learners in her program and she did not know of an alternative method that she could use. She went on to say:

> The main thing was that we needed a different approach and Nassau could not help us because they had one approach that wasn't going to work for us. So we had to do our own thing. . . I do think that they wanted the program to work and they wanted to help but it was just that we were doing something that was different. Maybe that approach is working well for Nassau but not for the Family Islands.

The coordinator on this island opted to use the Functional Approach for her program.

In the Laubach Approach, learners were provided with all the necessary materials. Those tutors using this method were also provided with the manuals and other resource materials by BALM. As previously noted, BALM provided all the local programs with sets of the Laubach series texts whether they intended to use that approach or not.

However, tutors complained that there was an urgent need for higher levels of the text to accommodate those students who had tested higher than a fourth grade level in the initial testing. As mentioned earlier, they felt that supplementary materials should be made available to assist with instruction. One tutor said that a library was needed on the island specifically for the Adult Literacy program, "I think that the Ministry should provide it [the library] since it is a government program and they need to better supplement the program."

The coordinator for the program suggested that there was need for more indigenous reading material at high interest low reading levels. Another concern of hers was the

establishing of an appropriate reading lab/library with recreational and instructional materials for the adult learner.

2. Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA): On one of the islands organizers adapted the Literacy Volunteers of America approach and found this approach very easy to use. They claimed that this approach is less structured than other approaches that they were familiar with. The coordinator explained the reason for choosing this approach:

> We are very unbureaucratic, very sensitive to the needs of the people. I was aware of the Cookie man in the States, Les Brown. He was a black entrepreneur, very successful, a millionaire. He helped to fund the program called Literacy Volunteers of America. And I knew of his philosophy as a graduate student in Education. I knew about the Laubach approach and I thought that it was very synthetic, highly structured and then I studied it without wanting to use it. But I like what the US groups are doing in the program called LVA. So I had that model in my background and I knew that if students came highly motivated they brought the text in [with them]. I cared about what they wanted.

The coordinator in this program trained the tutors to use the LVA approach. He explained that he used the program material to prepare new tutors coming into the program:

> I take stuff from the LVA manual to train the tutors. I copy key pages that would help someone interested in adult literacy to see the need for it and to be sensitive to steps to implement the program.

One of the tutors, a winter resident in the Bahamas indicated that she had received some training in teaching adults, "It was just how to teach adults. I had the Literacy Volunteers of America program training." This tutor had been tutoring in Canada for seven years before she moved to the Bahamas. She had quite a bit of experience with the LVA approach. When I asked her why she liked this approach she explained, "Oh, there are lots of good suggestions in there [the manual]." She said that she uses some of these ideas in her tutoring but she added that:

> Teaching in the Bahamas can't be the same as in Canada. They [Bahamians] have no idea of time. If you tell them to come at 3:30 they'll show up at 6:30 you know, or it might even be the next day. You see they are very easy going people.

Other tutors in the program found the LVA approach easy to use but they felt that one of the short-comings in using the approach was the lack of appropriate materials for the learners that they were attracting:

> You know [there is a] Haitian population [on the island]. On one occasion I gave them a Haitian folk story with characters similar to our Brer Bookie and Brer Rabbie stories. They were so thrilled, they were so enthused, they told me stories that their parents told them.

As mentioned previously, there are a number of non-standard English speakers (Haitians) and members from this ethnic group live on several of the Family Islands included in this study. Another tutor in the same program also felt that there was a need for more appropriate materials:

> First we need materials, and more materials for Bahamian students because a lot of the materials deal with things that they really don't need. I look at the books and I ask, What's the purpose? I'm even turned off from them. It sure isn't going to teach me anything about daily living in the Bahamas. A lot of times you have to do a lot of adjustments, do a lot of changes, you know, and that takes time. Even though you want the students to be comfortable and you want them to be interested, sometimes you come up with a story that took place in the 1800's that means nothing to them. Maybe we need something local, more local for here.

She commented further, "I hope that in the future there will be more Bahamianized materials. Well, I hope so. I mean they are doing all these revolutionary things but it looks like they are forgetting the books."

One of the advantages of this approach was the group teaching. One of the tutors who was used to working with large groups of learners explained:

> I find that working with smaller groups is better. I'm better able to group them and work with those needing individual attention as well. It is much better, especially working with the very weak learners.

Tutors agreed, however, that the approach was a good one and that they improvised a lot to off-set the lack of materials.

The coordinator did not consider materials a problem as he commented, "I knew that if the learners came in highly motivated, they brought the text with them." He explained that he tried to make the program fun and interesting for the learners:

> I make my adult literacy sessions much like church. I would do a lot of singing with them. It was like a celebration, it's not a heavy program. It's a light fun program. I do a lot of non-reading stuff with them. They bring their friends sometimes or they just bring a family member just to sit in and see what is happening, a sort of event. I make it fun and exciting.

This program attracted a more mature group of learners suggesting that they may not have been interested in writing examinations or pursuing further education hence the reason for, "a light, fun program."

When learners were asked to tell me about the program, one learner confirmed, "It is like a fellowship, it is like a coming together, like a family thing. It is like a social gathering." Others also voiced their opinions about the program. One felt that, "If we had another tutor added you know, I feel that another tutor will be able to help out and even broaden the opportunity for the learners." Other learners agreed with her, She continued:

> I'm speaking for the group now, we could do with smaller groups, right? You will never know, they may be added. We used to talk about it so much [having smaller groups] Oh! It is a pleasure working in groups, but then with me you could see that I just love people. I would like to see it [the program] advance you know. For example, we could go on field trips and do other things.

While learners explained that they were happy with the present program, they also expressed the need to add other components to it. In this particular program, the concentration was solely on reading. In other words, learners wanted to learn other things along with the reading. In the words of one learner, "Right now it is just the reading you know. I would like for them to add some mathematics--Arithmetic to meet our level." This notion was confirmed by another learner, "Other subjects areas would be nice." One woman suggested going on field trips. She explained what she meant:

> I would like to see something added to it [the program]. We can go on different field trips and do more getting together

> outside of class, you know what I mean? Educational trips, we could do a bit of that because that is another good experience. I don't mind catching the ferry like once in a while and probably go out to one of the other cays and have lunch together and do a little talking with the people in the community. Another time we could probably take a trip to a farm or something like that and see how the farmers operate.

Although learners indicated that they learned a lot from the program, and that their reading in particular had improved, these comments suggest that they wanted more than the cognitive benefits. They felt that the social aspect of learning was also important. It would seem that this was not an integral part of the present program. Even though one learner said that the classes were like social gatherings, it appeared that they still wanted greater networking. Visiting another community on one of the other cays could be quite an educational experience for them as each little community is unique and while the cays that they are referring to are not too far away, many of the learners may never have visited them.

The learners hastened to add however, that the organizers needed to keep the program. One learner expressed, "I am speaking for myself, I don't know about the others but I would like to see it continue the way it is and just add other things you know, expand the program." Another learner also shared the same sentiment, "I like it the way it is, working in groups because I like working with people."

The fact that learners expressed the need to add activities to the program would suggest that they were not involved in the initial planning of the program. Organizers apparently did not have the learners set goals for themselves. Even though the coordinator indicated that he was concerned with learners meeting their goals, the learners indicated otherwise. It should be noted that learner participation is a very major component of the LVA program. However, at the local level, this did not seem to be the case.

A number of tutors indicated that there was a lack of appropriate materials. According to the coordinator, however, there was not a shortage of materials. He explained that he was able to use some of the materials from his classroom and materials

were also provided through funds from local organizations in the community. The Secretariat also provided some of the necessary materials.

3. Basic Education Approach: On the island where the Basic Education Approach (BEA) was adopted, none of the organizers had any training in teaching adults although all were teachers. This professional background may have been the reason for them choosing the BEA. This approach was basically what they were familiar with and felt comfortable using. The coordinator explained how the program came about:

> I was approached by the pastor and the board members of a local church concerning setting a program for them. We didn't want our people to be out there and can't read. . . They wanted the program to be like a school setting. So I said okay. We'll include five basic subjects. During each class we spend about 45 minutes on reading and writing. One of the tutors taught the reading and another taught the Social studies. We later ended up with three different groups.

The BEA approach seems to have met the needs of the learners on this particular island. After several years, the program endures with few drop-out problems. In the words of one learner:

> We do everything from Social Studies to General Knowledge, the whole nine yards. There was one teacher who taught us reading--he was very special in that. But he has been transferred. Now there is something I need to say, I think that we need that specialty in reading. That's where Let's Read Bahamas needs to come in. We expect them to do something. Because of this adult education they need to come in and make their presence felt.

The advanced group of students was interested in going on to write exams or upgrade for entrance into college. Whatever the desires of the learners, the organizers made an effort to meet their needs within an island focus.

Many of the learners saw the program as giving them a "second chance." One learner explained:

> For many [of us] this is like a second chance. I did not complete high school so I did not have the opportunity to write the exams. This program is here and it is free. I can now work towards the BJC exam.

A number of learners expressed similar sentiments. Others shared that while they had written the BJC exams, they had not done very well, and therefore, this program provided them with the opportunity to write them again. One young woman elucidated:

> In this program we do everything I did in school. As the years go by things get a bit difficult. We were able to do other subjects that I didn't complete in high school. The program allowed me to continue. It is a good program. I think it is a good thing for the community.

For those learners in the advanced group the program provided a stepping stone for further education. These learners knew that in order for them to go on to college or to pursue any kind of advanced education, it was important that they obtain certificates in the national examinations as these were requirements, for the job market or seeking admission to college. One learner explained:

> A lot of people had to drop out of school and they didn't get what they really wanted to get out of school. This is an opportunity for them to get it right here and now. They could even study for the BJC exam. If people are serious they can accomplish whatever they want to accomplish through this program.

While the learners were taught in different groups according to ability, one learner felt that sometimes the groups were too large and that they were being "kept back." She clarified:

> In the class we had some bright students and some not so bright--they know it but it takes a long time to catch up. It means that the time you take for that one to catch up the whole class is behind. Then Mr.----- left so Mr.----- had to take both groups. It is hard to know that you have to deal with 20+ students. It is hard for one person to deal with all of those students at one time.

Teachers transferring from one place to another is common throughout the islands. It should be noted that on many of the Family Islands, those involved in adult literacy programs are usually teachers and, at the end of each school year, many transfers take place depending on the needs of the various schools.

Tutors also talked about the program. One tutor told me that she taught the beginner group:

> Well, I dealt with the older folks [learners], they were the beginners. They didn't know their letters so I started teaching the sounds of the letters, then I had them making the letters. I used information out of the kindergarten and grade one books with the letters and pictures. Then they were able to make the letters and say the sounds that the letters made. By the end of the year my group of learners was able to print their names.

She postulated that the learners enjoyed the program, "They were doing well. We did math as well--some of them could not count. We would work in class and then I'd give them some more problems to practice at home." According to the tutors, the learners liked the idea of doing "school subjects."

The tutor who taught the immediate group shared her role in the program with me. She contended:

> I dealt with the average group and I found that some of the work that I gave them I used to give my grade five students. Whenever I gave them homework the children at home were able to help the parents. Learners would come back and tell me that that their children had helped them. It was a sharing between parent and child. I must say that the group that I tutored, they were very pleased with the program. They liked the idea of going to classes. We dealt with math and language arts. The learners also liked art. They got excited when they had to do a little drawing.

Learners in this program appeared to be happy with the BEA. The data did not indicate the learners' preference for an alternative method of instruction.

Materials did not seem to create a problem for the organizers. The coordinator said that the Secretariat was very helpful in this regard, "Whenever I needed materials I only had to make one phone call to the Secretariat and the boxes of materials will be on the next mail-boat. They have supplied us with lots of books." He was able to use many of the texts that were available in his school since he was teaching the same subjects in the literacy program as he taught in school. The other tutors also used materials that they had adapted from materials that they used in their classrooms.

The need for indigenous materials as mentioned by another coordinator and tutors on other islands did not appear to be an issue in this program. This may be due to the fact

that these instructors were using a more traditional approach and the materials required for instruction were usually provided.

4. Functional Literacy Approach: On the island where this approach was used, the coordinator expressed her desperation in trying to plan the program single handedly. She felt that she had to have something planned to take to the tutors. She professed:

> I felt that I took on too much of the actual work load in terms of the making of materials. I don't think that I involved the tutors enough in the actual making of the worksheets or making of the games. I basically took that on and after a while I realized that it was too much work for me and probably I alienated them to a certain extent. I was taking to them materials that were already made and saying to them, this is what we are going to do next time. I needed to allow them to become more involved in that aspect of the program and not just present them with materials that they were going to use. I should have had them more involved in the actual making of these materials and get their ideas. I don't think I did a good job in that respect.

She admitted that she had the training provided by BALM but felt that:

> The training was very good, but very restrictive. . . Applying the training outside that particular method, you did not get that kind of training. We needed other strategies and methods to choose from depending on our various needs and we did not get that [in the training].

This coordinator further explained that she needed assistance with the actual planning and setting up of the program. She needed some kind of guidance as to how to go about it. In other words, she needed an approach to meet the needs of her clients. She explained to me what actually happened in the program:

> The first evening we asked them to decide who they wanted to work with. Some of the students didn't care, it didn't matter to them which tutors they worked with. In terms of grouping with other students we told them to choose persons whom they felt they would be most comfortable working with. It all worked out very well.

This coordinator decided to use the Functional Approach because it was one that she was familiar with. Being a special education teacher she used a life skills program in her regular classroom. Also, the group of learners that was attracted to the program indicated what they wanted from the program and in her estimation the functional approach

was the most appropriate approach. She said that while she was really interested in assisting the non-readers in the community, she was satisfied that:

> We have met a need in the community even with people who are readers but have problems with doing little things and we could make them more functional at whatever it is they have to do everyday. If we could satisfy that need I'm happy, but we really want to get to the non-readers.

She further explained:

> It is something that learners can benefit from in terms of their jobs you know, being better able to function at their jobs, being able to fill in forms for immigration and customs, that kind of thing. Our aim then was to get the people into the program and then for them to become ambassadors and go out and recruit the people who really needed to be in it [the program] because at that level we knew that if you were at the stage where you are filling in application forms and wanting to get a job interview obviously you have some reading skills.

As mentioned earlier, the learners in this particular program were all able to read. The learners were involved in the planning of the program. They gave the organizers suggestions and ideas and to some extent set the tune for how the sessions would be organized. One learner talked about it:

> They [the tutors] came to the first class with some plans, but that was not what we wanted or needed at that time. At the end of the first class they asked us what we would like them to include in the next lesson. So another student and I suggested assisting us in filling in various forms and writing resumes and actually preparing for job interviews.

The weekly session included a whole group lecture for which one tutor was responsible. Subsequently, learners worked in smaller groups with tutors of their choice. Individual help was given whenever there was a need. All of the learners agreed that the sessions were very beneficial and quite an eye opener. One gentleman said, "Things that I didn't know before I learned in this program, for example, the way you present yourself and how to communicate better." Another learner responded, "I'm now better prepared in case a job comes along." One of the learners gave a vivid account of what they did in the program:

> They would give us a little homework, you know, stuff to take home to do. There were a lot of puzzles with business words and they gave us words, business words to find. For example, if you are filling in an application form, what kind of words would be on it. Words that you might mix up like 'impaired', what would cause you not to work and even that word 'gender', some folks have trouble with that so they gave us stuff like that.

Similar to other respondents in the other programs, these learners also suggested that organizers should consider adding other subjects to the program. A number of the learners indicated they wanted to go on and write the BJC and BGCSE exams. One learner suggested, "They need to add other things to the program, mainly more school work perhaps, reading and maybe some more subjects." Another said, "They could add some math to the program." While they did not complain about the approach being used in their particular program, they expressed the desire to move on to higher levels of education. The reason for this desire could be because of the great emphasis being placed on education in the country.

The coordinator indicated that she developed the materials for the program. She was also able to use much of the materials that she used in school for teaching reading and life skills in the literacy program. She further explained that she adapted some of this material to work with the adult learners. She also received help from within the community in the production and the reproduction of materials. Any assistance that they required pertaining to materials was taken care of locally. Except for some books sent to them from the Secretariat, they provided their own materials.

Training And Professional Development

There seemed to be very little training and professional development provided for the coordinators and tutors in the BALM program. The data reveal that, except for the one or two training sessions that the coordinators received in the Laubach approach, there was very little or no training or professional development offered at the national level for tutors. Respondents generally considered this to be an important issue.

The coordinator responsible for the program using the Laubach Approach explained that it was required that all of her tutors participate in the orientation and training sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to familiarize volunteers with the program and to explain what was expected of them as tutors:

> All tutors are expected to participate in the orientation session. At the end of this session, those who are still interested are encouraged to sign up for the intensive training program. The training program, generally conducted on a weekend, lasts for 12 to 14 hours. Tutors are trained to use the Laubach method of reading. Tutors have to complete a number of activities before they are ready to begin as tutors.

There was no follow-up or on going professional development. Lack of funds may account for this omission as the coordinator pointed out, "A great deal of time and money are invested in their [tutors] training."

One coordinator explained that she attended the Laubach training session but was unable to use her training in the local program:

> I went in for the training program at Let's Read Bahamas, but it is a completely different program. It should actually be used to teach completely non-readers. I mean you can pick them from anywhere. Remember that the students we had in the program were actual readers so we could not use it at all. We had to make up our own thing and improvise. It did not meet the needs of the people that we were dealing with. So we had to make up our own as we went along and as we discovered what their needs were.

On another island the coordinator indicated that he provides the training for the tutors in the program that he is a part of:

> I hold monthly meetings for all those people coming back. I do monthly refresher courses using the LVA manual. I also have the Laubach training.

This coordinator was one of the two persons who had experience in adult literacy. He shared the same sentiments as a coordinator on another island who indicated that networking is essential and worthwhile, particularly in the Family Islands. She explained:

> We need to network with other people [coordinators and tutors] so that we can share ideas. . . We really need to know what programs are up and going and get names because we need to be stimulated and share information.

> The information goes to the Secretariat [from the local programs]. They need to make sure that all the groups connect and help each other. We can also learn from each other too. We need to find out what others are doing, what's working for them.

Those tutors on the islands where they were using the Laubach Approach mentioned that there were two training sessions for tutors in that particular program. One tutor said:

> We had two training sessions. Laubach trainers came out of Florida, they came in and did the training. It was 12 hours. All of the tutors had the same training.

Because of the wide range of experiences among the tutors, they expressed concern that those intense twelve hours may not have been sufficient for everyone. Considering that many tutors had no background in education they may have needed more that a one-time lengthy training session. One young woman explained:

> Based on the needs of each individual tutor, they may have wanted more instruction. It is almost like an individual thing. It depended in which areas they needed more instruction or training in.

Other respondents agreed that they need more training. It should be noted as previously mentioned, that many of the tutors were trained teachers and so they might have been aware of the various approaches of teaching reading. It is possible that they did not use any of these approaches in their tutoring because they may have felt that the approaches were not appropriate for adult learners. However, one tutor indicated that she sometimes used a variety of methods, and another tutor mentioned that they should consider using different approaches especially for those learners who were having problems learning phonetically.

Tutors also touched on the issue of professional development. It was the general consensus that all the participants need to be aware of what is going on in other literacy programs both locally and internationally. They expressed the need to attend local and International Adult Literacy conferences and workshops to get new and innovative ideas and to find out what is going on in other countries. One tutor who had recently attended one such event shared her experience:

> I went to an Adult Literacy Conference: It was for tutors and students. They had sessions for students and sessions for tutors. As tutors we were allowed to sit in on the students' sessions. I said if we could only get our students to see this. Those students attending that conference were not inhibited at all. There was one young man who had an art exhibition, but he was at the basic level in reading. I would really like to go next year and take some of our students. It is encouraging to know that there are other people around that world with the same problems.

Another tutor agreed and added, "Our tutors and students need to be exposed. It is comforting to know that we share the same problems [as people in other countries]."

Indications of professional development at the local level, however, did not surface in the data. Participants recognized the need for it, but it appears that the local organizers did not consider this a part of their responsibilities. Rather, it appears that professional development was something that should be provided by the BALM organizers.

Discussion

Some of the major difficulties of any adult literacy program are deciding what methods to use, assessing sufficient materials at the appropriate levels that will interest adult learners, and providing training and professional development for tutors and administrators. This is a concern for organizers of adult literacy programs world-wide (Thomas, 1983).

Methods used by instructors in the BALM program varied from island to island. Coordinator and tutor preferences appeared to play an important role in the decision making. Tutors who are also teachers would normally use those methods that they are most comfortable with. However, in the instance where the organizers of one of the programs had taken the initiative to use the Laubach Approach, they appeared to view reading as a set of skills to be learned rather than a meaning making process. On the other hand, they may have chosen that particular approach because it was recommended by BALM organizers and they were offering training in that particular approach.

In most adult literacy programs, literacy providers tend to follow the more popular methods. Thomas (1983) identified the Laubach approach, the strategies developed by the Literacy Volunteers of America or a more holistic approach based on adaptations or modifications of various methods as the most commonly used methodological approaches in adult literacy programs. Unlike in literacy campaigns (e.g. Russian, 1919; Cuba, 1961), where all tutors used the same methods throughout the country, in the present study, program organizers on the various islands chose different approaches to meet the needs of their learners. The data suggest that no matter which method was chosen, learners perceived that they experienced success.

The success of the different approaches used on the various islands would appear to suggest that it does not matter which approach is chosen. I believe, as the data suggest, that while the research (Cranton, 1989; Horsman, 1990) may recommend methods that are considered best suited for adult learners, what is important is what tutors and learners are comfortable with. I am convinced, however, that no one method will work with every learner and several of the respondents alluded to this perspective as well. Therefore, tutors should be exposed to and able to use alternative methods and techniques whenever the need arises. A few of the tutors did indicate that they used different approaches.

Organizers who implemented the Laubach one-on-one method in their program were convinced that this approach worked for them and they maintained that learners had made progress. The learners interviewed agreed. This approach provides an intense and supportive one-on-one relationship, particularly at the marginal literacy level (Darville, 1992). For some adult learners this seems to be what they needed.

Robinson (1995) expressed concern in the BALM document about the one-on-one method. She contends that it is not only slow but it also denies the adult learner several advantages to be gained from an informal class situation (e.g., motivation from peers which would help to advance his or her development). However, she did not recommend that tutors stop teaching by the one-on-one method. Rather, she suggested that alternative

methods should also be implemented. Noor (1982) suggests that, "The need felt by a learner for literacy is more important than the curriculum's content" (p. 179). As discussed earlier, the group sessions were very positively viewed by the learners who participated in this program.

According to the data, the LVA method chosen by the coordinator on one of the islands worked well for that particular group of participants. The tutors found it easy to work with and they claimed that it was less restrictive than the Laubach approach. It would appear that the LVA approach lent itself to more improvisation on the part of the tutors than some of the other approaches. This approach also allowed for more student participation which is in keeping with the findings in the research literature (Cranton, 1989; Fagan, 1991; Fingeret and Drennon, 1997; Knowles, 1980). It is important that adults feel a part of the program and are given the opportunity to help chart their learning. Adults usually know what they want when they join a literacy program.

The Basic Education Approach was used on another island and the data indicate that the learners in this program also perceived that they had experienced success. It was perhaps the closest approach to what these learners had been exposed to during their school years. It was also apparent from the data that this group of learners may have preferred the BEA because the goal for many of these learners was to write the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) examination. In order to achieve this goal, the BEA may have been the best approach. It should be noted that this approach followed a structured scheme because guidelines pertaining to the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) exam would have been available.

In the Functional literacy program, learners played a more active role in the planning process even though this involvement may not have been intended initially. Unlike the other approaches mentioned earlier, learners were encouraged to suggest the areas or topics to be addressed in the tutoring sessions. Organizers planned their lessons according to the suggestions or needs of the learners.

While each local program used a different approach, the data reveal that some tutors were aware of other methods even though they may not have been familiar with them. Tutors suggested that it would be advantageous to know about other methods and be able to use them whenever there was a need. According to Gray (1956), UNESCO conducted a worldwide study on methods of teaching reading to adults. The focus of this study was on the merits of various teaching methods. The findings suggest that no single method produces superior results. The findings also reveal that the use of a particular reading method will promote growth in whatever aspect of reading it emphasizes (e.g., word recognition, comprehension). It further suggests that the best results are realized when the method used focused on all of the essential aspects of reading.

On the issue of materials, while BALM provided ample supplies of books and other necessary commodities, there was a shortage of appropriate reading materials for the learners. Tutors also indicated that they were in dire need of supplementary instructional materials as well as indigenous materials. Indigenous content in adult supplementary reading with high-interest and low-vocabulary is still very much lacking in adult literacy programs. However, some literacy groups have produced their own local reading materials (Thomas, 1983). Researchers have indicated that the Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a very useful approach that is being used in many programs in different countries. It focuses on the needs of the learners as it is based on the learners' dictated material and it encourages the development of indigenous materials (Kennedy and Roeder, 1975; Thomas, 1983). Generally however, it would appear that the island programs were less aware of the possibilities emanating from the learners' own experiences. Even within the functional approach, learner language was not capitalized upon as a possible source of text.

The BALM documents indicate that organizers have been cognizant of the need for indigenous materials. Recommendations were made to examine available materials designed for adult learners, and to select a team of "in-house indigenous writers and illustrators" to adapt content to suit the Bahamian culture as a temporary measure until they

could produce their own materials (Robinson, 1995). The team was also to examine available indigenous materials to determine their suitability. While indigenous materials are scarce, local writers made donations of books that were culturally appropriate to the BALM program and each local program was provided with a set of these books.

Robinson (1995) further indicated that due to past colonial affiliation, many people have developed a very negative attitude towards using anything "local." In other words, "foreign is better." It has been very difficult diffusing this negativity. A review of the documents confirms that many proposals were made to the Ministry of Education to train a team of writers for the sole purpose of producing indigenous materials to be used in the BALM program. The documents indicate that a team was identified and had attended training workshops. However, up to the time of data collection, there was no evidence of any new materials being produced.

Concerning training and professional growth, respondents felt that they were being short-changed. Many of the tutors on the islands have had no training in the teaching of adults. Those who did have training received it because training was a requirement in order to tutor. This was the case on only one of the Family Islands. As mentioned earlier, BALM organizers ran training sessions for all of the coordinators throughout the islands in the Laubach Approach. However, the Laubach method was not adopted by all of the local programs because coordinators felt that the approach did not meet the needs of their learners or they were not comfortable with the approach themselves. Professional support for methodological approaches did not appear to be recognized by BALM.

The majority of the volunteer tutors on the islands were teachers. Their educational training probably made the tutoring easier for them as they were able to rely on their repertoire of strategies in helping their adult learners. A number of the volunteer tutors, however, had no professional teacher training, and furthermore, all tutors indicated that they had never taught adults before. This suggests that tutors would need continued support in this area. In other words, BALM might consider providing them with on-going

support and the necessary training and workshops to keep tutors informed of any new developments and strategies in the area of adult literacy.

There is very little formal training offered in adult education programs whether they are major campaigns or smaller projects (Thomas, 1983). Training is usually conducted at the local program level through training or workshop sessions. These training sessions are normally very short, and very intense. Often this one-time training is insufficient, especially for those tutors who are not teachers and who may not have had any kind of formal training in this area. Training has been a short-coming in many of the major literacy campaigns throughout the world (Eklof, 1987; Leiner, 1960). It is the general consensus of the instructors on the islands that on-going training as well as professional development is necessary.

Thomas (1983) indicated that training of tutors for adult literacy is one of the most important parts of literacy. She further suggests that training should be ongoing so that tutors can develop their skills, share their experiences and keep in touch with new materials. Tutor training should also be concerned with the techniques involved in the teaching of reading and writing to adults, and with the strategies required to promote active learning. Most importantly, training courses should reflect the principles of adult education. It appears that Thomas' suggestions have only been attended to with limited success on the Family Islands.

Evaluation

The terms assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably by some educators (Rhodes and Shanklin, 1993). Similar perspectives for these terms are maintained within this study. The purpose of evaluation is not to cast blame but rather to help with planning a more effective program and to inform decision-making. Evaluation in the present study is discussed from two perspectives--learner assessment and program assessment.

Learner Assessment

Assessment is an on-going process of determining progress. Across the islands, the issue of learner assessment was a frequent topic of conversations. When tutors were asked how they determined whether their learners were making progress, however, their comments varied. One tutor casually said, "We give them homework." Another explained:

> We had workbooks and they had homework. Every session we had worksheets. For example, if we were doing the application forms, we would take sections out of this and would make a work sheet. We'll take all the vocabulary words that they were using and make up a worksheet, e.g. My --------- is Bahamian. They'll [learners] have a number of words and they have to choose the correct one to fit. The correct word would be nationality. We did games, word searches and bingo, so all of that gave us an idea of what they could do. When we did resumes, they had to do their own resume. We did it in sections so at the end they had a complete resume. . . They also had to write business letters and we did [mock] interviews.

The Functional Literacy approach was used in this particular program, so using this form of assessment may have been the most appropriate choice. The objective in this instance may have been to make sure that learners understood and were able to produce the various documents correctly so that they could actually use them.

On another island, one tutor commented, "Well, if they can do the work that I give them, you can tell when they are reading better, or they can do the math. Then you know that they are improving."

Others focused on a somewhat different perspective, one that attended to commercially prepared assessment materials. For example, one tutor commented:

> Well, through the tests that I give. I give the pretests to see where they are and from the pretest I determine the areas where they need or do not need help. . . So I wouldn't have to spend too much time in the areas that they are good in. And then in the middle, I'll give another little test to see how they are doing.

In the Laubach program tutors used the texts in the series which also provided them with continuous learner assessment materials. A tutor stated, "Well, we have a test that we give them at the end of each book. First of all they are tested before they come out and then

they are given to different tutors." One of the tutors demonstrated a similar view when she shared how she assessed her learners' progress:

> I determine the learners' progress from the exercises that are covered in the books. Also, I cover a sort of maximum level that I set up depending on what I know the student is capable of doing. If the mastery level is seven out of eight correct, if he gets five out of eight correct depending on the type of skill it is I don't think it is worth spending more time on that. Or I may feel like the student has spent enough time on it.

However, assessment procedures did not always flow easily. One instructor in particular admitted that she found it difficult to assess one of her learner's progress:

> Sometimes she got the marks, but after a short break she didn't seem to remember anything at all. The only way that I could assess her was when she finished the first book. She just got through that but really didn't fully comprehend everything that was in that book to go on to the next level. And I found it very hard to determine what she had really learned. I don't know whether she had learned much at all. Or whether it was. . . maybe from one lesson to the next which was two or three pages, maybe she may have remembered something, but in the long term I really don't know if she learned much or got very much from the whole thing. . . And that's after 65 hours [of tutoring]. She was having problems with phonics and I felt that she wasn't getting anywhere. Maybe she needed a different approach and I wasn't trained to do that.

One tutor expressed concern over the transfer of learning. She explained:

> I have concern with the transfer of learning because I found in some instances because of the way the program [Laubach] is set up words would be repeated throughout the book for the student to get the repetition. They would be exposed to these words some times [out side of the text] and I have to show them that the same concept would apply in decoding words. But they can figure out the words in the book because they have just learned that word. They learn it in isolation at first and then it is repeated in the stories.

Another tutor echoed this concern, "In the work book it was fine but out of the book she couldn't follow it through." Although assessment appeared to be problematic, some tutors were resilient in their efforts to find solutions to determine learner progress.

One of the tutors said that she tried another form of assessment when she discovered what she had been previously using was not effective:

> One form of assessment that I tried to use with my students was to find out how they are coping in their daily lives. For example, I would ask them, "Do you have any situations that cause you difficulty when you are in a jam?" I would use that to see how they are applying what they had learned in the lessons in their daily lives. Sometimes it works.

The built-in assessment in the Laubach series appeared to be very helpful for those who were using this approach, particularly for those tutors who were not teachers. There was little indication in the data that tutors had any training on how to assess learners' progress with the result that they generally used intuitive forms of informal assessment. One may question whether such approaches were effective in providing learners with the necessary feedback to increase their literacy abilities.

Furthermore, learner assessment of a more formal nature also seemed to be absent within the island programs. Coordinators did not report that they kept records of learners' increased literacy achievement standards such as pre and post program measures.

Few references were made with respect to learner self-assessment. Although some learners made general comments such as "I'm a better reader now" or "I'm not afraid to try to read things," few were able to make specific references to their literacy achievements. This apparent lack of learner self-assessment was particularly evident in those programs that did not offer the Laubach program where learners at least could articulate which level of reader they had mastered. While it is understandable that assessment strategies might be less specifically identified in two of the other programs (LVA and Functional Approach), it is somewhat surprising that learners who were enrolled in the Basic Education program made no reference to their increased literacy achievement. It would appear, therefore, that regardless of program, the learners who participated in the study maintain traditional perspectives for assessment. That is, they view assessment as primarily other rather than both other and self-directed. Given that coordinators and tutors also made no reference to

learner self-assessment, one may suggest that they held similar perspectives to those of the learners.

Program Assessment

Much of the data that addressed program assessment evolved from the questionnaire completed by the four coordinators involved in the study. The information provided in the questionnaire was frequently expanded upon during interview sessions.

Coordinators considered program assessment to be very important. "It's very important" noted one respondent. "We need to know whether we have met our goals and more importantly, the students' needs and goals." Another suggested that program evaluation was significant for program continuity as it pertains to modifications to the program. Others viewed it as a means to determine the degree of progress made by learners from their point of entry into the program to their present level of literacy achievement. Evaluation was also a means of determining the relevance of the materials to the experiences of the learners, and a way of assessing learner and tutor retention levels.

Coordinators overwhelmingly agreed that a formal evaluation policy should be developed for all literacy programs funded by the Ministry of Education. They further suggested that in establishing such a policy, literacy coordinators, tutors, board members, the Ministry of Education and to some extent literacy students should participate in establishing program evaluation. A number of coordinators also suggested that community sponsors, representatives from the business and the wider community and adult education institutions should be involved in this venture. One coordinator noted:

> Formal evaluation would allow us to determine the positives and negatives of the program. It will also help to identify needs for improvement.

This point was supported by the views of another island coordinator who commented:

> Program evaluation is critical to the success of the program. Evaluations allow us to make modifications, additions or deletions to the program, in a timely fashion. Instruments should be used for short and long term evaluations.

These sentiments were further voiced by the coordinator on another island:

> I think that we need to develop instruments for evaluation. I did not do it [evaluation]. But I think that it is important. I didn't do it because I didn't see the necessity in the beginning, but it is an important component and that is a weakness in my program.

On one of the islands the coordinator cited lack of evaluation as a major weakness of the program:

> We didn't do much evaluation, we went on enthusiasm. I did a little evaluation but I don't think that I got enough evaluation from the students. I think that that was a weakness. It is hard to say, the major one was lack of evaluation and lack of feedback from the students. I don't know if they had the confidence to give feedback. I'll like to know what feedback they give you, what they say to you, that will be helpful for me.

Although all coordinators viewed program assessment as an important aspect of program delivery, only two conducted formal evaluations of their program and frequently included tutors and learners within this assessment process. The board of directors for these two programs assisted the coordinators with the assessment. However, all coordinators submitted annual reports to the Let's Read Secretariat. Such reports primarily focused on the number of learners and tutors in the program.

The two coordinators who evaluated their programs made several adjustments to their programs based on their findings. The results prompted them to submit budgets to the Ministry of Education, to advocate for an adult reading lab and library, to embark on an increased promotional campaign and to develop innovative strategies to meet the needs of their adult learners.

Those coordinators who did not conduct program assessment felt they did not have enough training to carry out the task. One coordinator noted, "all the participants are all volunteers, consequently there is not enough time to conduct program evaluation." On the other hand, one coordinator who had attempted formal evaluation of her program was quite

distressed by the lack of response from Ministry authorities. Expressing her dissatisfaction, she noted:

> I would send a full report into Nassau and they never even sent to say that they received it. No feedback to say whether what we did was good or to give suggestions as to how we could improve next time. So we feel that we are out here all alone with no kind of help. We really feel that we need to have an evaluation. We need to have them tell us, help us, guide us or just respond to us. Not just send the material down here and every now and then they call for information. You know, how many people in the program, that is basically all they have done.

Although formal assessment of the programs was less than ideal, all coordinators indicated that they consistently gathered informal feedback about their programs through the tutors, learners, the community and to some extent the program sponsors. They all indicated also that they made changes to their programs based on this informal feedback in the areas of learning materials and tutor training techniques. Some of the coordinators indicated that they made changes in their recruitment policies for learners and tutors.

Respondents sometimes associated program evaluation with program effectiveness. The degree of effectiveness appeared to be determined by how well the overall literacy program was working. In other instances, they saw evaluation as being concerned with meeting needs of learners, tutors or the community. Respondents also referred to evaluation as identifying the strengths and weaknesses in all areas of the program. With respect to program effectiveness, one coordinator explained:

> Presently, we rely on tutors' log sheets and other instruments used by tutors for record keeping to give us some idea on student progress. We keep anecdotal records from tutors' rap sessions, and also minutes from steering committee meetings. As coordinator, I make an effort to contact all tutors and new learners for feedback on the program.

This coordinator further contended that:

> The responses from tutors, students and the community have all been positive for the most part. We got quality time in the print and electronic media, and good financial assistance from business places. However, some tutors expressed

> concerns about how effectively we have been meeting the needs of adults in the community. We have only scratched the surface of what needs to be done to make this program as solid as possible.

Another coordinator who claimed that the organizers had experienced some difficulty in the initial stages said that once the program actually got off the ground, people were satisfied and they felt that it met a need in the community. "We [coordinator and tutors] also have developed a closer relationship with members of the community which is very important."

One coordinator felt that the strength of his program was the fact that it was unbureaucratic and very sensitive to the needs of the learners. Also, he had individualized the program for each learner, resulting in learners remaining in the program. On another island, the coordinator concurred with this view and that the design of the program was a major strength:

> The actual design of the program--the one-on-one tutoring, and program flexibility which allowed tutors and students to set their own hours. Also, all of the tutors were trained and the adults' privacy was not violated. The Laubach is a proven method and adults experience immediate success in the program because of the built in strategies. The program is also available to the learners free of charge.

Several tutors and coordinators could identify specific strengths of their program. These strengths addressed learner retention, institutional procedures that met learner needs, community support and enthusiasm for learning. On the other hand, respondents were less specific when discussing program weaknesses. Rather, their attention addressed BALM deficiencies rather than weaknesses within their own program offerings. For example, one coordinator forcefully stated:

> A program such as this one needs a committee who will be able to work full time on the operation, evaluation, modification and improvement of the program. The Ministry of Education had been using administrators who already have full agendas to run this program. The coordinator of an adult literacy program should not have any other job save that of running the program. There should also be strategies in place to generate a constant cash flow for the program;

> particularly if it is to be offered free of charge or at a minimal cost to the new reader [learner]. More concentration needs to be placed on making literacy a community effort; particularly at the workplace level. There is constant need for trained tutors because of the one-on-one approach, also due to the attrition rate of tutors leaving the program. More educational alternatives are needed for adults who complete the program and want to continue to improve themselves.

Others supported this view when they indicated:

> BALM is very bureaucratic, very much like the Ministry of Education. I found it very difficult to get the assistance I needed when I needed it. It was just too much red tape involved.

> I am concerned about program longevity; what will happen to this program after 1998, when Let's Read Bahamas comes to a close? I am concerned about Bahamas Government and the Ministry of Education's level of commitment to this program. Commitment to me means assigning a full-time administrator and staff to this program; meeting budgetary requests and planning beyond the year 2000. Such a program needs people who will be able to work full time, Ministry of Education has been using administrators who already have full agendas to run this program. It needs a full time coordinator whose only job is that of running the program. There is a fear that ministry of education and Bahamas government are not as committed to this program as they should be. There is a need for more research, data and analysis of the adult illiterate in our community. Again, all this points back to assigning an administrative team to this program solely.

Such comments lend credence to the view that program organizers on the Family Islands may not have built a solid relationship with BALM authorities, that they feel isolated and overwhelmed by the volunteer positions they hold and that there is a need for material and professional support for local program directors.

Some learners also indicated how the programs might be more effective. One learner suggested that the coordinator meet with students on a regular basis to find out what the learners' needs are, "Maybe she could meet with the group say once a month, get together with them and find out what the students' needs are." Another learner focused on the lack of available tutors. She explained that it was very difficult for one tutor [who is also the coordinator] to contend with all of the students:

> Right now it is only one tutor, and he has a full-time job and his family and sometimes he has other meetings. So sometimes he could only spend half-an-hour and he has to leave. It is a load for just he alone. When he is by himself he has the whole group. With sufficient tutors we can break up into different groups. But seeing that he is the only tutor now everybody has to come together in one group.

A young female learner presented a similar view:

> Because they are not being paid for it [tutoring] they tend to say they don't need to go everyday. It is hard because they have families too. Making that special effort though has made it better for me. But I know that there is room for improvement. I think that they need to find out from each person exactly what level he or she is at because some of the things in reading was too easy.

This lack of tutors was a recurring theme with respect to program weakness from the learners' perspectives. In addition, some learners felt that more frequent sessions might improve program outcomes.

Another learner highlighted the importance of the tutor devotion for teaching as program effectiveness when he noted:

> If we can get all the tutors who plan to become a part of the program to devote their full attention to the program and make sure that students complete all their assignments and don't let them get away with anything this will be good. They must also get to know their students well, know their background so that they can work together better.

Overall, however, the learners commended the coordinators and tutors for the good work that they were doing. Learners appreciated the fact that tutors all had their own families and were willing to give of their [coordinator and tutor] time to help them [the learners]. Some of the learners mentioned how the tutors were always well prepared and very patient. One student, however, was of the opinion that he did not have sufficient information with respect to program improvement:

> I cannot be really critical at this point and I don't want to make statements unfairly or that are not true about the program. I think that I'd better become a bit more involved in these things and watch the program and see what ideas, goals or other things that need to be done to make the program better.

Coordinator views with respect to increasing program effectiveness focused on materials, community involvement, and tutor training. Comments such as the following examples identify these issues:

> Developing more indigenous reading material that will be of a high interest, low reading level for the adult new reader [learner]. Establishing an appropriate reading lab/library with recreational and instructional materials for the adult reader. On-going training programs for tutors. A budget that will allow learners and tutors to attend conferences abroad and locally. I would like to see these kinds of techniques implemented because they are highly conducive to program continuity.

> I would like to get the non-readers in the community because that is basically what the program is all about. And we still have not come up with how to do that just yet. We need to get the community leaders involved and go out there ourselves in person rather than use posters and letters.

> Recruitment we would definitely change, maybe the location we would change depending on what the learner prefers.

> Well, I think that the basic program needs to be continued. I guess the committee needs to sit down and evaluate the program thus far and make adjustments. I think that the biggest adjustment would be having to supplement materials, more training for our tutors, and even group sessions for the students. I think more and more of that needs to be done and we must have a resource of materials that tutors can come to when they are stuck. That has been a problem for a lot of our tutors--not having an alternative.

Such statements indicate that participants have a clear view of what is needed to ensure program effectiveness. BALM's organizers may wish to consider these suggestions from these practitioners when planning improvement of the program. As one coordinator suggests, "There needs to be a firm and serious commitment on the part of the Bahamas Government and the Ministry of Education in order to make the necessary improvements for the smooth and successful running of the program in the future."

Discussion

Like literacy, there are many definitions for evaluation. According to the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1993), evaluation is defined as determining the

significance, worth, or the condition of something by careful appraisal and study. According to the research (e.g., Padak and Padak, 1991), evaluation is intended to examine an experience objectively, systematically and with exactitude in order to maintain performance at a certain level. In other words, it is the process of judging merit or worth of something (Bhola, 1979). Program evaluation appears to be a problem area in adult literacy programs. It is either done in a haphazard manner or it is not carried out at all (Padak and Padak, 1991).

While not all of the organizers in the four programs engaged in formal evaluation, they appeared to be using common-sense evaluation on an on-going basis as they tried to meet the needs of the various adult learners. Every time the tutors sat down to plan another tutoring session, they tried to evaluate the previous lesson in order to make the necessary instructional adjustments. Coordinators sought the views of tutors, learners and even community members as they informally evaluated their program.

Program evaluation according to Knowles (1990) is the greatest controversy and the weakest technology in all education, particularly in adult education and training. He explained that the primary purpose of evaluation is to improve teaching and learning and not to justify what we are doing. Padak and Padak (1991) share this view. Their report on three statewide literacy surveys carried out in the United States concluded that evaluations are either seldom undertaken or are reported in ways that make meaningful interpretation difficult. The results of this study present somewhat similar views.

The issue of learner assessment has received considerable attention in the literature (e.g., Cranton, 1989; Fingeret and Drennon, 1997; Knowles, 1980). The current consensus on this topic indicates that the assessment process should assist learners in portraying and reflecting the extent to which literacy is helping them make real changes in the way they live their lives, day by day (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997). The results in the present study appear to suggest that although some learner assessment took place, primarily within one program, generally assessment occurred on an informal basis. In addition,

learner self-assessment was even more obvious by its absence although as early as 1980, Knowles suggested that learner self-evaluation should be both encouraged and facilitated.

In the present study, while tutors sometimes used informal means to assess learners' progress, little or no formal assessment was being conducted. Cranton (1989) has suggested that a balance between formal and informal assessment is the most appropriate road to follow. This researcher is particularly specific with respect to suggestions for learners to self-evaluate their own progress. She suggests that learners select projects or assignments upon which they may be evaluated, that they select their own "weights" for activity evaluation or that they assist in the evaluation of group or peer work. This participatory approach to assessment may increase ownership perspecitves for literacy achievement.

As indicated by the study's results, it appears that tutors often were unsure of how to gauge their learners' progress. Such insecurity would appear to suggest that tutors, even those who are currently teachers, may need further training with respect to assessment procedures. Such an effort appears to be particularly necessary within those programs that do not supply commercially produced evaluation materials.

Evaluation was a built-in component of the program in the initial planning of the BALM program. However, there is only limited evidence in the data to suggest that much formal evaluation had taken place on the Family Islands. The two coordinators who indicated that they carried out formal evaluation did so because it was required by their board of directors rather than BALM authorities who only required an annual report that addressed numbers of tutors and students enrolled in the programs. One may question also, as the results demonstrate, the lack of BALM support afforded to the program directors with respect to formal assessment procedures.

According to the coordinators, there had been no formal evaluation of the BALM program in general. However, at the local level, the organizers acknowledged the importance of formal evaluation and they were aware that it could be of assistance to them.

They stressed that adult literacy was new territory for them and while they were trying their best to cope, some evaluation guidelines to help them are necessary. These organizers want some assurance that what they are doing is correct and how they can adjust or improve the program for future success. In the words of one coordinator, "We need some guidance." Those practitioners wishing to improve their practice need to know what works so as to, "identify and eliminate the barriers to effective program" (Diekhoff, 1988, p. 630). It would appear that the Family Island programs are being evaluated on an informal hit-or-miss basis.

Diekhoff (1988) suggests that the haphazard state of program evaluation has led to a mis-interpretation that everything is fine in adult literacy. The difficulties that are experienced in evaluating adult literacy programs according to Padak and Padak (1991) may be due to the design of the programs. The nature of adult literacy programs and their dependence on volunteer tutors to accommodate the learners may compound the problems of evaluation. In this present study, the data suggest that lack of formal evaluation is a short-coming of the BALM program.

Evaluation has always been a problem in adult literacy programs. While volunteers, instructors and coordinators are capable and reliable, it may be very difficult for them to conduct such an important and awesome task because of their lack of training in such procedures. For many of the volunteers, the area of adult literacy may be new to them and it may require all the extra time that they may have to learn to function and be productive in the program.

The data indicate that at the local level, coordinators have been documenting the progress of their programs. The fact that every coordinator had to submit annual reports would suggest that they have been evaluating the program to some extent and such documentation would be useful in an evaluation process. The data further show that the organizers of the local programs realize the short-comings of the programs. They also know what has to be done to rectify these problems. However, the evaluation process has

to be a collective effort. Local organizers cannot do it on their own. The Government and the Ministry of Education who initiated the Let's Read Project need to take the initiative to support consistent formal evaluation at the local level.

The issue of who might benefit from informal or formal assessment procedures appears to have been given only limited attention. BALM authorities may have a vested interest in determining the success of the program support they offer to the islands. Program coordinators may report on these benefits within the dimensions considered important by BALM as for example the number of islanders enrolled, the level of literacy achievement, etc. On the other hand, learners may have little interest in these overall achievements and may be more attuned to personal goals. In other words, how we evaluate depends on the questions we pose and the audience to whom we wish to submit our results. Within BALM evaluation procedures, it appears that currently only the first view is considered important.

The general lack of attention to learner self-assessment is a cause for concern given current perspectives on adult literacy learning (Cranton, 1989; Knowles, 1980). Even within those programs that followed a less structured teaching and learning format, it appears that learners were not encouraged or facilitated to evaluate their own learning. One may suggest that not involving learners in evaluating their literacy progress reaffirms for them that personal goals with respect to literacy achievement have little place in their learning. In addition, inattention to self-assessment may support the view that "teacher (tutor) knows best" and continue to foster a very traditional school-like atmosphere for learning that ignores the viability of the learners as competent adults in their community.

Overview of the Findings

In regard to learner participation in adult literacy programs, motivation played a major role. Learners' motive for joining the program was to improve their reading abilities. This desire to increase their reading was generally for their own personal gratification. Generally, there was little or no mention in the data concerning the need for economic

improvement or upward mobility on the job. The majority of the learners were of the opinion that their reading proficiencies had increased. They also believed that their increased reading abilities have afforded them increased and improved literacy practices.

In regard to those adults who chose not to become a part of the programs, learners maintained that such adults were embarrassed and were afraid that others on the island would find out about their limited literacy abilities. The majority of participants agreed that when learners selected to leave a program, they did so out of necessity.

The participants overwhelmingly agreed that participating in the program had influenced their lives in more ways than one. Educationally, the program afforded them the opportunity to carry out literacy tasks that they were previously unable to do. Learners also experience increased self-confidence and self-esteem that resulted in improvement within their daily life styles.

The literacy experiences provided learners with improved social status within the community. Learners felt a great sense of independence and empowerment which allowed them to more comfortably perform their daily literacy tasks. Being able to be a part of the "inner circle," so to speak, and develop new relationships were important to them. They attributed this new community success to their involvement in the literacy program.

With respect to the instructional initiatives, the overall impression on the part of the respondents was that the various methods used throughout the islands were working. Learners opined that they had experienced success in the programs. Despite this sense of success however, a number of tutors expressed concern over the use of a single approach in the teaching of the adults and indicated that tutors should be aware of, exposed to and have opportunities to implement several different innovative approaches to meet the literacy needs of their learners.

The availability of supplementary materials for tutors and having sufficient supplies of appropriate materials for learners, in particular indigenous materials, surfaced as a concern on a number of islands. The findings suggest that because many of the volunteer

tutors had no formal training in education, it was important that they be provided with alternative instructional materials to meet learners' needs.

In regard to training and professional development, interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that this was a short-coming in the BALM program. The data suggested that little or no training was provided for the coordinators and tutors. While it was pointed out that the majority of the coordinators attended a short training session, and except for those tutors on the island where initial training was a requirement of the program, there was little provision for tutor training. It was the consensus of the tutors that training and professional development should be an integral part of and an on-going process in any literacy program. It was further suggested that networking among the participants in the various programs would serve as a means to address this concern.

The final area of the study dealt with evaluation. This was a major issue for tutors but even more so for coordinators. Most felt that evaluation was important for the success of the program. The data revealed however, that at the local level, there appeared to be little or no evaluation taking place. On the issue of learner assessment, the results in this present study suggest that assessment was conducted in a very informal manner. While the literature strongly promotes learner self-assessment, there was little or no learner self-assessment taking place in the programs on the islands. Tutors sometimes also experienced difficulty assessing their learners' progress.

Program assessment was highlighted by tutors and coordinators as being the greatest weakness of the BALM program. According to the data, tutors and coordinators acknowledged its importance and suggested that some mechanism be put in place for conducting evaluation. It was further suggested that all the stake-holders be involved in this undertaking. Formal evaluation was conducted by the organizers in two of the programs because it was required of them by their board of directors. There was little evidence in the data to suggest, however, that any kind of formal program evaluation was carried out by BALM.

Summary

This chapter presents the results of the study as well as the discussion of those results. Chapter 5 presents a general overview of the study and its conclusions. It also provides recommendations for future research and suggestions for modifications to the current BALM program.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted to explore how the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program. Chapter five presents a brief overview of the study and its major findings. Implications for the BALM program in the Family Islands and suggestions for further research in adult literacy in the Bahamas are also presented.

Overview of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine within the environment of the Family Islands of Exuma, Andros and Abaco and the island of Grand Bahama the effectiveness of the Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement (BALM) component of the Let's Read Project. The study was centred around the following research question: How does the nature of the literacy experiences of selected Family Island participants as perceived by them, their tutors, and their program coordinators demonstrate the effectiveness of the BALM program? The participants for the study consisted of four program coordinators, twenty tutors and twenty-two learners on selected Family Islands and Grand Bahama.

For my data collection procedures, I primarily used qualitative research methodologies, including questionnaires, interviews, documentation, and a reflective journal. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Data were analyzed by identifying the common themes that emerged within and across data sources. Four prominent themes surfaced from the data: (a) participatory stances; (b) program influence; (c) instructional initiatives; and, (d) evaluation. Each of these themes was supported by subthemes.

Major Findings

The findings of this study contribute to the limited research that attempts to make sense of the lives of less literate adults and to portray their perceptions of their participation

in literacy programs. Malicky and Norman (1996) claim that little research has focused on the lives of adult literacy learners or on their perceptions of changes in their lives as they participate in literacy programs.

Participatory Stances

1. The learners were highly motivated to participate in BALM in order to improve their reading abilities. They believed that such increases in their literacy enhanced their feelings of self-worth and self-satisfaction. While this finding is consistent with findings in other studies (e.g., Darkenwald and Valentine, 1984; Malicky and Norman, 1996) the respondents' motivation for participation in the present study was of a more personal nature. Learners did not participate in the program because they expected to receive economic reward as a result of their participation, nor were they overly interested in job mobility. Rather it appears that the learners were interested in increasing their literacy skills for personal gratification. In other words, learner participants did not join the program because they had to but because they wanted to.

2. Learners who participated in the study suggested that non-participation on the part of their peers was primarily due to embarrassment or shame that the community would be aware of their low literacy levels. This finding is supported by others (Fingeret and Drennon, 1997; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965). This reluctance to participate on the part of adult learners, as indicated in the literature, has customarily been attributed to negative experiences in school (Briscoe and Ross, 1989; Quigley, 1992). However, these reasons were not advanced by the adult learners of BALM. Learners indicated that lack of educational opportunities rather than negative school experiences accounted for their low literacy levels.

3. Unlike many studies concerning adult literacy, learner retention did not appear to be of concern for Family Island program organizers. Instead, there was concern over tutor drop out. This is a notable finding of the study as tutor drop out has been given limited attention in the research literature. On the other hand, attracting the most needy learners to

programs was somewhat problematic, a finding similar to that found in the literature (Hunter and Harman 1979).

Program Influence

4. Learners indicated that their increased reading and writing skills have enabled them to do things that they were unable to do before (e.g., read the Bible, sign cheques, complete forms correctly). This finding is similar to results reported in other studies (Bogg, Buois and Yarnell, 1979; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1984; Malicky and Norman, 1996). The findings in the present study further indicate that learners felt a sense of empowerment and independence which allowed them to participate more actively in the social and cultural practices of their various island communities.

5. Learners indicated that increased self-confidence and self-esteem, attributes that they felt they lacked before their participation in the literacy programs, have affected many aspects of their lives. The data reveal that learners would like to participate in the programs at a more interactive level, suggesting that the learners in this study are leaning toward a more participatory approach to literacy than what is currently offered to them in many instances. Similar notions were supported by Campbell (1995) and Malicky and Norman (1996).

Instructional Initiatives

6. The findings of this study suggest that within the context of BALM, no single approach to adult literacy learning is perceived to be superior to another. Regardless of the approach tutors and coordinators chose to use, learners indicated that they experienced success in extending their literacy abilities.

7. The data suggest that there was a lack of supplementary instructional materials for learners in all programs. Similar results have been reported by Thomas (1983). Furthermore, an urgent need appears to exist for indigenous materials that would meet the cultural needs of adult learners.

8. Coordinators and tutors have suggested there was a paucity of training and professional development that would enhance their teaching endeavors. The lack of professional support was particularly problematic for those islands that did not offer the Laubach program.

Evaluation

9. Learner assessment on the part of coordinators and tutors appears to be an area that was given little attention in the local programs. The data reveal that there was lack of formal learner assessment and generally little informal assessment was conducted. Tutors found this aspect of their teaching responsibilities the most difficult to accomplish effectively. Furthermore, learner self-evaluation was virtually non-existent in all island program contexts.

10. Program evaluation was the greatest short-coming of the island programs. Lack of time and expertise were cited as the major reasons for this limitation. Similar findings have been reported by Bear, Ferry, and Templeton (1987) and Knudson-Fields (1989).

Implications for BALM

Much of what is currently occurring within the Family Island programs is positive and should continue. In order to improve its offerings, the following implications for BALM are suggested based on the results of the study's findings.

1. BALM's organizers need to be concerned with and aware of the individual needs of their adult learners. Quite often, the organizers' perceptions of learners' needs are not what learners consider important. More attention might be focused on meeting the needs and goals of all learners. As this study demonstrates, adult learners' needs and goals may not necessarily fit with the objectives proposed by BALM and the findings of this study suggest that a re-examination of the goals and objectives of BALM may be necessary. For example, more careful adaptation of programs from North America may be employed to better meet the individual needs of the learners.

2. Island coordinators and tutors are to be commended for attempting to meet the expressed needs of their students and for trying to develop programs that meet these needs. BALM authorities may wish to re-examine their strong commitment to the Laubach program and expand their horizons to recognize and support other program approaches as well.

3. While more attention is usually focused on learner retention, BALM organizers may need to focus more closely also on the area of tutor retention. As this study demonstrated, in some of the local programs included in this study organizers were experiencing problems with retaining tutors rather than learners.

4. The findings of the present study suggest that BALM may need to rethink the way adult literacy programs are initiated. In planning for future adult literacy programs, BALM organizers might consider involving learners in the development phase of the program. In other words, BALM might move towards a more participatory approach in adult literacy.

5. The findings suggest that BALM provide its volunteer tutors and coordinators with continuous support and the necessary training and professional development to keep tutors well informed of any new developments and strategies in the area of adult literacy. Such a process might be developed through local and national workshops. A staff specialist in the area of adult literacy at the administrative level of BALM may alleviate this short-coming.

6. It is imperative that BALM address the concern of student assessment practices. The data indicated that many tutors did not feel competent in assessing learners' progress. BALM organizers could perhaps provide training regarding assessment needs that focuses on both summative and formative procedures.

7. BALM authorities may wish to consider procedures that help support locally developed programs through personal and material means. Such locally authored programs may expand the range of literacy practices needed to meet the goals of local participants.

The curriculum developed by Fiore and Elasser (1988) may serve as a model to accomplish Family Island authored programs.

8. BALM may wish to take the initiative to organize and provide local program formal evaluation on a regular basis. The findings suggest that participants have a clear indication of what ought to be done to provide effective adult programs. BALM officials may wish to take note of the suggestions provided by the local organizers in the present study. While the data indicated that tutors and coordinators know what needs to be done concerning evaluation, they maintained it should be a collective effort across the community and across the nation.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Bahamas Adult Literacy Movement (BALM) component of the Let's Read Project from the perspectives of coordinators, tutors and learners from a selection of Family Islands and Grand Bahama. To further augment the relevance of the study, I provide the following suggestions for further research in the area of adult literacy.

1. The learners identified motives for participating in literacy programs on four islands. Further research could determine the motives for adult learners participating in adult literacy programs on the other islands in the Bahamas and elsewhere.

2. There is a need for further investigation involving non-participants to determine why adults in the Family Islands in the Bahamas who can benefit from adult literacy programs prefer not to participate.

3. The scope of this study did not allow for the exploration of tutor retention. Other research could be conducted at the national level to determine the retention trends of tutors and learners in adult literacy programs in the Bahamas.

4. Since little focus is placed on tutor retention in the research literature, there is a need for further research in this area on a more global level.

5. The success of adult literacy programs depends to a great extent on the support of the volunteer tutors. There is a need for further research to determine the needs of tutors in adult literacy programs at the local, national and global levels.

6. Further research at the national level should be conducted to ascertain participants' perspectives on learners having a more participatory role in adult programs in the Bahamas.

Conceptual Framework Revisited

When I initially generated the idea for this study, I had spent several years pursuing post graduate studies. Over the duration of these studies, I had the opportunity to take many courses that addressed current perspectives for literacy development in general and adult literacy in particular. I became intellectually invigorated by the theories of major writers in the field--James Gee, Brian Street, Paulo Freire, and Arlene Fingeret to mention only a few. I made their ideas my own; I spoke their words as if they were mine. And I slowly slipped away, in my academic shell, from the rude and crude realities of literacy practices within the less literate world.

Before I began my research in the Bahamas, I obtained copies of all the BALM documents. As I read through them, I became anxious, concerned and even distraught. BALM authorities recommended the Laubach approach for adult literacy learning. The right political words were peppered throughout the document, citizenship, participation, and empowerment. But I asked myself, how could such emancipatory goals be realized through an approach that I considered primarily one of skill and drill? How would I be able to link my new-found beliefs concerning literacy practices as opposed to literacy tasks within such an approach? Suppose my respondents only focused on the bits and pieces of print rather than the meaning-based perspectives that I knew were so important? What would happen if my conceptual framework did not "fit" the evidence of the data? I flew to the Bahamas more anxious, more concerned and more distraught than ever.

As I reread the conceptual framework I present in Chapter 1, and as I reflect upon the journey I have taken as a researcher, I realize that life is not black or white within the literacy domain, that the reality of literacy is fuzzy and that those who are involved in extending their literacy abilities do not fall easily into "autonomous" or "ideological" camps. An autonomous perspective to literacy development assumes that literacy is a set of skills which can be employed regardless of the context in which the literacy event takes place. With respect to the ideological perspective, Street (1984) maintains that the social, political, and economic nature of literacy practices vary from group to group within a society. It appears from the findings of this study that those who help the less literate extend their literacy abilities are more interested in the learner than the approach they use. In short, when learners and teachers come together, they attempt to reach a common ground of negotiation of meaning so that both benefit from the experience. The labels we as academics place upon the manner by which meaning is negotiated are just that--labels that allow us to talk about them rather than with them.

As I talked with my respondents, I was struck by their commitment, dedication, enthusiasm and pleasure in their joint experiences. Even within what I had considered a predominately skill and drill approach, there were strong elements of more open participatory learning events, especially within the group workshop sessions. Within the more learner-generated functional approach, there were elements of strong attention to skill development. None of the approaches appeared to be purely ideological or autonomous. Few respondents focused on what they were learning with respect to literacy specifically--the literacy tasks. Rather, regardless of program approach, their focus was much more on how their learning allowed them to be more actively involved in their communities--their literacy practices.

The continuum between autonomous and ideological perspectives for literacy is a long one. Learners and their tutors move up and down that continuum as need arises. There are times when the social context, as proposed by Gee (1987), demands the correct

completion of an official form or the correct spelling of a word. At other times, the social context demands an ability to speak to a Church audience or the most appropriate way to conduct oneself at an interview. As I reflect upon my research journey, I realize that emancipatory and participatory adult literacy programs come in many flavours. The respondents in my study demonstrated the idiosyncratic views each held with respect to their BALM experiences. However, I have taken the liberty to weave their individual threads into one case study garment.

Kazemek and Kazemek (1992) support a systems theory as a conceptual framework for adult literacy examination. Within this framework, individuals are not viewed as isolates. Rather each is "connected to other individuals as well as to the social situations cultural forces and the physical space that makes up his or her environment" (Meyer, 1988, p. 276). The respondents in this study highlighted the individual strengths, needs, modifications and relationships that influenced their learning. They presented particular reasons for enrolling in a program; they considered that their program experiences decided both their academic and social successes; they built relationships among one another as program participants; they touched their communities in new ways. Such factors may remind us that when we, as researchers, examine the threads of literacy, we recognize that the individual fibers are strengthened and influenced by the other fibers that surround them. Similarly, when we examine a phenomenon such as BALM through the individual lenses of the different participants on different islands, we may accept that the BALM project is a cloth of interwoven individual experiences. Such experiences may influence and even direct how the fabric should be measured and cut to fit what literacy means within the Let's Read Project.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE *

Family Islands - BALM Program Coordinators Survey Questionnaire

Please place a check in the appropriate box.

1. Your program location is: _____

2. Your program size is: [ ] under 20 students [ ] 20 - 40 students [ ] over 40 students

3. Number of males:_____ Number of females:_____

4. Number of students in the following age groups in your program:

   [ ] Less than 20 years old
   [ ] 20 - 30 years old
   [ ] 40 + years old
   [ ] not known

5. Number of students who have completed:

   [ ] Primary School
   [ ] High School
   [ ] Junior High
   [ ] not known

6. Average length of time students have been in the program:

   [ ] Less than 6 months
   [ ] 6 to 12 months
   [ ] more than 2 years
   [ ] 1 year
   [ ] 2 years
   [ ] not known

7. Number of tutors in your program: _____

8. Are your tutors : [ ] paid [ ] volunteers

9. Average length of time tutors work in the program:

   [ ] Less than six months
   [ ] 6 to 12 months
   [ ] more than 2 years
   [ ] 1 year
   [ ] 2 years
   [ ] not known

10. Are your tutor-student sessions generally: [ ] one-on one [ ] group

11. As coordinator, you are: [ ] part-time [ ] full time

12. You have been a coordinator for:

    [ ] less than 6 months
    [ ] 2 to 4 years
    [ ] 6 months to 1 year
    [ ] 1 to 2 years

* Adapted from Thomas, A. (1989), Cited in Jackson, C. (1992).

13. Is your position : [ ] paid [ ] unpaid

14. From where does your program receive funding ?

15. Does your program receive any other kind of support? [ ] Yes [ ] No

16. If yes, indicate the type of support and who provides the support. (Check all that apply.)

Support	**Provider**
clerical support	_____
supplies	_____
administrative support	_____
office space	_____
Other (Specify)	_____

17. Does your program have an advisory board? [ ] Yes [ ] No

If yes, how many people are on the board?_____

18. Whom do the members of the advisory board represent? (Check all that apply.)

[ ] Community [ ] Tutors
[ ] Learners [ ] Other (Specify)_____

19. What are the primary issues of concern for your advisory board (for example: fund-raising, tut training, program enrollment, awareness of the program in the community) ?

20. What does program evaluation mean to you (as applies to an adult literacy program)?

21. Is formal program evaluation currently a part of your literacy program?

[ ] Yes Please go to question 22
[ ] No Please go to question 27

Complete this section only if you <u>do</u> conduct formal program evaluation.

22. Who is responsible for conducting evaluation in your program?

[ ] the literacy coordinator
[ ] literacy board members
[ ] the sponsoring agency
[ ] other
(specify)_____

23. Whose opinions are solicited in the evaluation process? (Check as many as apply.)

[ ] the sponsoring agency (Ministry of Education & Training)
[ ] literacy tutors

[ ] literacy students
[ ] board members
[ ] the literacy coordinator
[ ] community members
[ ] other
(specify)_____

24. What determines whether or not program evaluation is conducted?

[ ] regular evaluation is a funding requirement
[ ] regular evaluation is a board policy
[ ] other
(specify)_____

25. Please check the appropriate response for program evaluation which occurs in your program.

	Never	Sometimes	Always
A. The program annually assesses the extent to which learners have achieved their goals.			
B. The program is aware of learners' progress after they have "graduated" from the program.			
C. The reasons for those who have dropped out are known.			
D. Students' opinions on the program are sought by appropriate means e. g. interviews informal conversations			
E. Information is gathered about tutors' performance.			
F. Information is gathered about tutors' willingness to continue.			
G. Tutors' opinions on the program are sought by appropriate means e.g. questionnaires interviews informal conversations			
H. An annual report is produced and distributed to interested participants and community members, including the advisory board.			
I. Priorities for the next year are based on the results of the evaluation.			

J. Plans are made to seek the resources or make the adjustments necessary to implement the priorities.

26. In the past what kinds of adjustments have been made to the program in response to evaluation findings?

Complete this section only if you do <u>not</u> conduct formal program evaluation.

27. Why do you think formal evaluation is **not** a part of your literacy program? (Check all that apply.)

[ ] not enough time to conduct program evaluation
[ ] not enough training to conduct program evaluation
[ ] not interested
[ ] unsure of the benefits of program evaluation
[ ] program evaluation is not required by sponsoring/funding agency/ advisory
[ ] program evaluation is not necessary
[ ] other
(specify)_____

28. Would you like to see formal program evaluation as a part of your literacy program?

[ ] Yes [ ] No Please give reason for your answer.

ALL RESPONDENTS PLEASE ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS.

29. Some literacy coordinators feel that informal feedback provides them with sufficient informatio carry on an effective literacy program and that formal evaluation is not necessary.

Do you gather informal feedback about your program?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

30. If you gather informal feedback, which of the following sources provide feedback?

[ ] tutors [ ] program sponsor
[ ] learners [ ] community
[ ] others
(specify)_____

31. Have you made changes to your program on the basis of informal program feedback?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

32. What types of changes have you made? (Check all that apply.)

[ ] new recruitment policies for learners and tutors
[ ] new program learning materials
[ ] different tutor training techniques
[ ] other
(specify)_____

33. Do you think a formal evaluation policy should be developed for all literacy programs funded b the Ministry of Education & Training?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

34. If a formal evaluation policy **were** developed, who do you think should participate in establishing that policy? (Check all that apply.)

[ ] literacy coordinators
[ ] literacy tutors
[ ] literacy students
[ ] other
(specify)_____

[ ] literacy program board members
[ ] Ministry of Education & Training

35. Please add any comments you may have about literacy program evaluation.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in this survey. Your participation is appreciated.

Please return this completed questionnaire in the attached envelope.

Would you like a summary of the results of my study [ ] Yes [ ] No

Name:
Address:

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Possible Interview Questions For Coordinators

1. Tell me about your literacy program.
2. What do you see as some of the strengths of the program?
3. What do you see as some of the weaknesses of the program?
4. What are some of the concerns that you have about the program?
5. Tell me about the goals of the program.
6. Describe to me what the tutors, students, community say about the program.
7. What are some of the things you would like to :
   a) implement in your program
   b) change in your program. Why?
8. What are your views on program evaluation?
9. How is the effectiveness of the program evaluated?
10. Who is responsible for the evaluation of the program?
11. How might you attract more students?
12. How do you encourage students to stay in the program?
13. What reasons do you think students have for leaving the program?
14. How do you select tutors?
15. How long do tutors stay with the program? Why?
16. How do you match student and tutor?
17. What training do you provide for tutors?
18. How were you chosen for this position?
19. What training did you receive for this position?
20. How do you acquire materials?
21. How do you liaise with other BALM coordinators in the islands? elsewhere?
22. What has been your personal experience as a coordinator in the program?

Probes such as " Tell me more : may be used to extend interviewee responses.

Information obtained from the coordinators survey will generate other questions.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Possible Interview Questions For Tutors

1. What are your experiences as a tutor in the program?
2. Why did you decide to be a tutor?
3. What training did you receive for tutoring?
4. How would you modify or change the tutoring training?
5. How do you feel that the program is meeting the needs of the students?
6. What do you feel needs to be done to improve the program for students?
7. How do you determine if your student(s) is making progress as a literacy learner?
8. What input do you have in the development of the program?
9. What aspects of the program would you change? Why?
10. What aspects would you keep? Why?
11. How long have you been tutoring?
12. How could we attract more students to the program?
13. Why do you think many adults choose not to enroll in the program?
14. Why do you think some students drop out of the program?
15. Describe for me a typical tutoring session.
16. How do you prepare for your tutoring sessions?
17. Who do you think your student(s) feel about you/their classes/their learning?

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Possible Interview Question For Students

1. Why did you decide to become involved in the program?
2. How do you think the program benefits :
   a) you
   b) other participants
   c) the community
3. Tell me about your experiences in the program.
4. How long have you been in the program?
5. What changes in yourself have you noticed since you became involved in the program?
6. What advice do you have for someone who is thinking about enrolling in the program?
7. How does the program meet or not meet the needs of the students?
8. How could your tutor make the program better for you?
9. How could your coordinators improve the program?
10. Why do you continue to attend the classes?
11. What would your reaction be if you or another student were asked to participate in the planning and running of the program?
12. What suggestions would you give that might attract / encourage those who can benefit from the program but chose not to enroll?
13. What do you think can be done to prevent students from dropping out of the program?
14. What do you like the most about attending classes?
15. What do you like the least about attending classes?
16. How long have you been attending classes?
17. Do you feel that you are a better reader and writer now because of your participation in the program? Why? Why not?

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E
Consent Form

My name is Ruth Sumner and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I am interested in finding out about your experiences in the BALM program. I trust that what I learn will be helpful to you and to other students and literacy workers who are interested in adult literacy.

I agree to participate under the following conditions:

1. I will allow the interviews to be tape-recorded. I understand that the interview is being taped so that whatever I say is not changed or misunderstood. I can turn off the tape-recorder at any time during the interview.

2. I agree to allow Ruth Sumner to share the information from the interview with students and literacy workers through publications and conferences. However, I understand that my privacy will be protected by not using my name or any other information that might identify me.

3. I understand that I can discontinue participation in the study at any time. Also, Ruth Sumner will destroy my records if I wish her to.

4. I understand that Ruth Sumner will not be evaluating my performance.

Signature:_____
Date: _____

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F
Student information Questionnaire

1. Name:_____
2. Gender:_____
3. Birthdate:_____
4. Address: _____
   _____
   _____
5. Place of Birth:_____
   City/Settlement_____
   Island_____
   Country_____
6. First Language _____
7. Marital Status:

Married	[ ]	Divorced	[ ]
Separated	[ ]	Single	[ ]
Widowed	[ ]		

8. Number of children at home:_____
9. Number of children who have left home:_____
10. Are you presently:

employed full-time	[ ]	studying full-time	[ ]
employed part-time	[ ]	studying part-time	[ ]
working at home	[ ]	unemployed	[ ]
retired	[ ]		

11. What is your current occupation?
    _____
12. What other occupations have you had?
    _____
    _____
13. Level of education achieved:

Less than grade 9	[ ]	Grade 12	[ ]
Grade 9	[ ]	1 year college	[ ]
Grade 10 to 11	[ ]	Other	[ ]

14. When did you join this program?
    _____
15. Have you ever attended another literacy program?

Yes	[ ]	No	[ ]

15. If yes, how long did the program last?
    _____
16. What is your monthly income?_____

APPENDIX G

APPENDIX G
Covering letter to Coordinators

Address Date
Dear_____
My name is Ruth Sumner. I am currently on leave from my position as Instructor of Reading at The College of The Bahamas in order to complete my doctoral studies at the University of Alberta.

I have chosen for my research to explore the experiences of the coordinators--and a selection of tutors and students in the four Family Islands of Abaco, Andros, Exuma and Grand Bahama who are involved in the BALM project. As coordinators - of the program on_____ island, I am asking for your participation in helping me carry out this research.

Attached to this letter is a survey questionnaire. I would appreciate it very much if you could complete it and return it to me at your earliest convenience, in the attached self - addressed envelope. I am asking the coordinators--on_____, _____ , and _____ to do likewise.

In addition, I would like to meet with you to discuss your program further in _____. I will telephone you so we can discuss this possibility, talk further about my research and get your advice on the selection of tutors and students I would like to interview on _____. At that time, we can also talk about the confidentiality aspect of the study that will ensure that any information given to me by any of the participants will remain anonymous.

I look forward to meeting you and finding out about your program.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Sumner
Address: 320 RH Michener Park
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada
T6H 4M5

Telephone: 1-403-438-0851
Fax: 1-403-434-0248